



MH Equipment finds it easy to evolve into a completely paperless company with rugged mobility solution

Rugged tablets, custom software give entire field- and office-based workforce the right tools for every job

MH Equipment began in Peoria, Illinois in 1952 as one of the smallest Hyster forklift dealerships in the United States. From such humble beginnings, MH Equipment has grown to become one of the largest and fastest growing full-service material handling dealerships in the U.S. In 1994, the company was purchased by current CEO John Wieland. Since 1994, MH Equipment has grown from a small company of 50 employees into an organization composed of multiple dealerships with over 800 employees and 27 servicing locations throughout Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The growth has occurred both organically and through acquisition, resulting in a company that is rich in diversity, vast in geography and committed to excellent customer service. MH Equipment works diligently with its customers to anticipate changing needs and provide solutions for effective results. It offers forklift and all types of mobile equipment service and repair; rental equipment; training and safety courses; and warehouse design services. The dealerships also stock a huge supply of parts and accessories to keep customers' fleets operational.

www.mhequipment.com

Challenge

Eliminate paper across sourcing, inventory management, customer service and accounts payable functions

MH Equipment has not been quick to adopt technology just for technology's sake. Over the years, they have reviewed electronic solutions but did not find one that seemed to have all the efficiencies that would justify the investment.

That is why, for nearly 65 years, MH Equipment generated and managed every single work order for its full-service material handling equipment service business on paper. Field technicians had to either submit completed work orders, inspection forms, and timecards via mail or physically walk them into the office for processing. Neither option was efficient, and paper-based documentation and records management had several downfalls. Work orders could be



SUMMARY



Customer

MH Equipment
North America



Partner

TPI

Featured Software

Mobile Service Plus

Industry

Field Service/Material Handling
– Heavy Equipment Sales and Service

Challenge

Eliminate paper across sourcing, inventory management, customer service and accounts payable functions

Solution

A fully paperless operation powered by Zebra XSLATE B10 fully rugged tablet PCs and custom-developed Mobile Service Plus software from TPI

Results

Electronic work order system improved business economics and worker readiness during a period of steady company growth

hard to read and frequently got very dirty. Key-punching data into the business system from paper created opportunities for errors. Handling, processing, and storing mounds of paper created many inefficiencies and challenges. And technicians handling paperwork manually or through the mail added no value to the transaction; rather, they caused delays and extra expense. MH Equipment wanted a way to minimize the administrative burden on its field-based teams so they could remain focused on the company's priority: customer service.

"Right now, we complete approximately 95 percent of our work orders in the field, on-site at customer locations. Only 5 percent of equipment actually comes into our shops for repair," explained Randy Kaluza, president of operations, MH Equipment. "When we were a smaller company, the paperwork was not overwhelming. But as we continue to grow and add more technicians and gain more customers that require service, the handling of paperwork, work orders, time cards, etc. has become a major task in all of our service departments. We knew we needed to do something different to keep our service departments focused on the customer. We knew that if we could leave the paper world and move into an electronic environment, we could improve our service experience."

Solution

A fully paperless operation powered by Zebra XSLATE B10 fully rugged tablet PCs and custom-developed Mobile Service Plus software from TPI

In 2017, MH Equipment began taking aggressive steps to modernize its business processes and implement advanced workforce technology solutions that would improve resource utilization and, ideally, reduce operating expenses while improving the customer service experience with their customers. It first solicited the assistance of TPI, a mobility solutions provider that specializes in the design and installation of wireless communications, RFID, and barcoding technologies. TPI worked with MH Equipment to develop Mobile Service Plus (MSP), a software solution that mimicked the company's widely-adopted paper processes.

"We wanted to make this transition to a paperless environment as painless as possible for MH Equipment's team," explained Mark Stone, MSP account representative, TPI. "We took care to replicate their existing dispatch and work order processes when designing the electronic solution. The goal was to improve worker productivity, not disrupt their workflow."

"Overall, we are very pleased with the return on our investment. The combined Zebra and TPI mobility solution has very quickly increased our operational efficiency, eliminated resource waste, eliminated thousands of dollars a year in printing costs, and improved our customer satisfaction levels."

Randy Kaluza
President of Operations,
MH Equipment



When it came time to select a mobile device for this new paperless system, TPI recommended the Zebra XSLATE B10 rugged tablet. As a Platinum-level Valued Zebra Partner (VXP), TPI had deployed this mobile computing platform in both field service and industrial environments before. The solution provider could easily verify the XSLATE B10's longterm performance, reliability, and connectivity in real-world manufacturing, warehousing, fleet, and equipment service environments.

“Several of our customers have deployed an MSP software solution on the XSLATE B10 rugged tablet in recent years and we were able to vouch for the compatibility of this particular hardware and software combination,” Stone continued. “More importantly, we were able to demonstrate the significant efficiency gains and return on investment that MH Equipment could expect from this best-of-breed mobility solution.”

For peace of mind, MH Equipment did field-test a few different rugged tablet models with the MSP software before making a final selection.

“Given the scope of this project and scale of investment, we wanted to be sure that both the mobile computing platform we chose could meet our strict performance, usability, security and durability requirements,” Kaluza added. “It quickly became clear that the XSLATE B10 rugged tablet was the best device capable of facilitating a fully paperless workflow across our entire operation. It worked very well with the many Hyster & Yale diagnostic programs we use to diagnose and repair forklifts, as well as the new MSP software.”

Results

Electronic work order system improved business economics and worker readiness during a period of steady company growth

MH Equipment was able to become a completely paperless business quite quickly after deploying the Zebra XSLATE B10 rugged tablet-based mobility solution. All “clipboard” processes are now completed electronically, which has increased field technicians' readiness and overall resource availability.

“Not only are work orders, inspection forms, and timecards now completed and submitted in real time by our field teams, but they are instantly accessible by our back office for processing,” Kaluza explained. “The remote dispatch capabilities have also improved our resource utilization, and the work order dashboard allows us to see our work-in-process in real time. “



With the IP65-rated XSLATE B10 rugged tablet in hand, MH Equipment's technicians can now open a work order in the field, populate it with customer and vehicle information, apply labor and parts to the work order, add service repair codes, add a variety of preventative maintenance and inspection forms to the order and create their time card, among many more business functions. Technicians can also use the rugged tablet to show the work order to the customer, capture a signature using the digital pen, and email a copy of the work order to them before electronically filing the time card and work orders into MH Equipment's service offices for processing.

"The constant connectivity, bright large screen display, digital pen and overall durability of the XSLATE B10 has given us very valuable new efficiencies related to data capture and knowledge sharing in what can often be very demanding working conditions," Kaluza added. Our technicians also appreciate their newfound ability to retrieve mission-critical data while on-site. Our technicians are now more empowered to take care of the customer than ever before."

Information related to the lift truck's service history is available immediately on the Intel-powered rugged tablet.

"The ability for our technician to see every work order that was ever done to a piece of equipment is invaluable to their ability to diagnose and repair the equipment," Kaluza stated.

The technician also has an up-to-date inventory of the parts currently available on their own truck, other technicians' trucks around them, and within their dealership's warehouse. Even parts requests are now completed electronically.

"These online tools equip our field technicians with the insights they need to quickly bring lift trucks back into service, which makes our customers very happy. Downtime is very expensive in the material handling business," noted Kaluza. "Our team, as a whole, is also completing more service calls on a daily basis, which has enabled us to shorten our service call responses times. The real-time visibility into our parts inventory has helped us complete customer repairs quicker. And our office staff spends more time solving customer problems instead of keypunching paperwork and timecards."

As Kaluza emphasized: "Overall, we are very pleased with the return on our investment. The combined Zebra and TPI mobility solution has very quickly increased our operational efficiency, eliminated resource waste, eliminated thousands of dollars a year in printing costs, and improved our customer satisfaction levels – all of which have contributed to elevated cost savings and the generation of new revenue sources."

For more information on Zebra Rugged Tablets,
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