



CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

Medallion Cabinetry

Delivery Confirmation System Cuts Errors and Losses

Challenge

For customers, the quality and craftsmanship of Medallion Cabinetry products is immediately apparent. But proof of delivery frequently was not. The company delivers truckloads of cabinets each week to retailers and home centers throughout the country. Delivery documentation sometimes wasn't entered into Medallion Cabinetry's computer system until two weeks after the delivery was actually made.

"There was a big time delay in getting documentation back to us," said Harlan Scott of Medallion Cabinetry. "Drivers got a signed delivery receipt and mailed it back to us at headquarters from their dispatch center. Someone at headquarters then had to scan the paperwork into the system—we spent around eight hours a week just doing that. It was a very manual process, and we didn't always get all the data we needed." While Medallion Cabinetry waited for delivery documentation, it did not have the information it needed to respond to customer queries or to resolve disputes. This lack of visibility sometimes led to costly—and unnecessary—rework and new deliveries.

"Customers might call and say they didn't get a delivery, so we'd send a new one out, but it would turn out they did receive the original but lost it within their own facility," said Scott. "Most of our products are custom, and if we have to remake an order it takes a couple of weeks. It doesn't take many mis-deliveries before it's a big problem."



Solution

Now Medallion Cabinetry uses wireless mobile computers and printers to immediately document the delivery—with clear paperwork for the customer and a wireless update to Medallion's records system at headquarters. Systems integrator Emkat, Inc. worked with Medallion Cabinetry to create the system, which features a bar code on every product to facilitate tracking at each step during truck loading, transportation and delivery.

Drivers previously used preprinted orders and checked products off as they were loaded onto the truck and unloaded during delivery. Occasionally products were missed, which threatened order accuracy. Now, drivers record all product movements using a Symbol MC70 handheld computer with integrated bar code scanner from Motorola, which is also loaded with order details. The software application Emkat developed alerts delivery drivers if orders are incomplete and if incorrect items have been unloaded for the delivery.

"Now we can verify the right product was unloaded from the truck at the right spot," said Scott.

Customers sign directly on the handheld computer screen to acknowledge the delivery. The driver then enters the delivery transaction, which sends a command using its Bluetooth® wireless interface to a rugged RW 420™ mobile printer from Zebra Technologies to create a delivery receipt, complete with the image of the customer's signature. Simultaneously, the wide-area radio inside the handheld computer sends a transmission to Medallion Cabinetry headquarters to update the host computer system in real time.

"We've taken a lot of the human intervention and human mistakes out of the process," said Scott. "Now we have information instantly. Because the records are electronic, if a customer calls and wants information or a copy of their order, we basically just have to push a button." The software application helps keep errors from entering the system. The legible, signed delivery receipts also prevent errors by giving customers a clear and accurate reference for inquiries.

"Now everything is clear, which helps when customers call to check. We wanted a mobile printer that was very high quality and wouldn't fail, so we didn't really look beyond Zebra. We have used other Zebra® printers for years, and they've been very reliable," said Scott. "We put our mobile equipment in some real tough environments—our drivers literally work anywhere from 20 degrees below zero (-20° F) to 120 degrees above and they can be hard on equipment. We knew we wouldn't have to worry about Zebras because they're made for these environments."

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The right asset. In the right place. At the right time.



Scott said the Zebra printers also stood apart from others because of their small size and ease of use, particularly for changing paper. Bluetooth connectivity to the handheld computer was another attractive feature. "The less physical connectivity you have to do in the field, the better off you are," Scott said. "We didn't want to be tethered to anything, because if the connector breaks, you're stuck. We're not having any trouble whatsoever with our printers."

Results

The eight hours a week previously spent scanning in days-old delivery records into the computer system are now put to better use. But the labor savings are only a small part of the success story.

"The time saved scanning in documents and looking for paperwork and delivery records alone would pay back the investment in the system," said Scott. "But the intangibles we're getting are more important. We're providing much better customer service, and can work with our customers proactively. We no longer have to wait two weeks to get the information our customers need."

"Before, if someone entered the wrong digit on an order number, we would have to spend a lot of time trying to find the records," Scott continued. "Now there are fewer errors. Plus, we can search by order number, customer name or almost any other variable, so we are saving a lot of lookup time."

Medallion Cabinetry plans to integrate the data it gets from its delivery operations into its customer service system so it can respond to customer inquiries even more efficiently.

"Errors are a big deal when you're trying to help a customer and have to find a document," said Scott. "We went to the new system because we wanted to provide better customer service. Handheld computers, mobile printers and wireless communication have raised our service and reputation for quality."

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GSA#: GS-35F-0268N
P1028052 (07/10)



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