



SUMMARY



Customer
Saddle Creek Logistics Services
Lakeland, FL



Partner
Peak-Ryzex
Columbia, MD

Industry
3rd Party Logistics (3PL)

Challenge
Modernize warehouses on an ongoing basis to keep up with consumers' continually growing buying choices and demand for rapid order fulfillment and receipt

Solution
Zebra Technologies Enterprise Mobile Devices:

- TC8000 Touch Computer
- ET50 Tablet (Vehicle Mounted)
- TC52 Touch Computer
- MC9300 Mobile Computer
- DS3600ER Ultra-Rugged Scanner
- DS9908-R Scanner
- ZT610 Industrial Series Printer

Service and Support:

- Mobile computer, barcode scanner and label printer depot repair services
- Onsite label and laser printer maintenance services
- Managed service center for custom solutions

Results

- Increased volumes for receiving, put-away, inventory, picking and shipping, even with expanding product SKU counts
- Stayed competitive and increased service volume without increasing full-time headcount
- Reduced warehouse associates' training time, including temporary associates hired during peak demand seasons
- Enabled retail business customers to offer consumers more buying choices
- Better supported evolving customer needs through continued innovation within supply-chain operations

Saddle Creek Logistics Raises Fulfillment Accuracy and Efficiency via Phased Warehouse Modernization

Periodic technology upgrades help customers offer more buying choices

Since its founding in 1966, Saddle Creek Logistics Services, an omnichannel supply-chain solutions and third-party logistics services (3PL) provider, has enhanced the product selection and availability its retail customers can offer consumers. In today's 'Now Economy,' where consumers have unprecedented access to buying information and goods with a mouse click or screen tap, they've come to expect instant, 24/7 shopping gratification. To help customers meet that expectation, supply-chain companies like Saddle Creek must evolve to keep up.

In response, Saddle Creek has undertaken several phases of warehouse technology modernization to continually boost fulfillment accuracy and speed. Largely as a result of support from Peak-Ryzex, a Zebra Premier Solution Partner, those efforts are paying off.

Saddle Creek's 1.5 million-square-foot Fort Worth, TX warehousing and 3PL services facility is part of a nationwide network of 46 facilities strategically located in 16 states to enable the company to deliver goods to most of the U.S. population in two days or less. Modernization initiatives at Fort Worth and its other facilities enable the company to follow through on that commitment amid steadily growing order volume, and at existing full-time staffing levels.

Bobby Hays, Saddle Creek's vice president of distribution based in Fort Worth, notes that it has made numerous technology upgrades to incrementally boost order-fulfillment accuracy and efficiency. The upgrades, starting with barcode scanning, have made all the difference.

“Peak-Ryzex puts together the pieces Zebra offers to meet Saddle Creek Logistics Services’ needs.”

**Chris Hanson, account manager,
Peak-Ryzex**



Hays, a supply-chain logistics industry veteran of more than 30 years, recalls that the company’s goods-tracking processes were completely manual and used paper records in the pre-scanning era. “We used stickers to identify products and their locations,” he says. “Consumers’ choices were limited to one product, one brand and one size.”

Paper-to-Pixels Product Tracking

Replacing paper-based product-tracking records with barcode scanning in the early 2000s was Saddle Creek’s first phase of technology-driven warehouse modernization. “Our ability to scan and ensure order accuracy really proliferated SKU counts in the warehouse and our customers’ offerings,” Hays says. “Today, in apparel, for instance, they’re able to offer a different cut, a different style, a different color and even a different shade of color in some cases.”

For Hays and Saddle Creek, the goal of modernization has been managing that higher SKU count by making processes such as put-away and order picking more efficient. Doing all that requires the right tools.

Different Form Factors, Same Efficiency Goal

“It’s important to listen and really understand the specific characteristics that make up a customer challenge,” says Chris Hanson, account manager for Peak-Ryzex, which has served Saddle Creek since 2002. “Peak-Ryzex puts together the pieces Zebra offers to meet Saddle Creek Logistics Services’ needs.”

These days, Saddle Creek’s challenge is undertaking a second, and current, modernization phase by adopting new mobile computing and scanning device form factors that are purpose-built for warehouse work. The goal is increasing warehouse associates’ productivity wherever possible to keep up with burgeoning order volume. It’s why Saddle Creek uses more than 1,500 Zebra® mobile computers, tablets and scanners for workflows from receiving to shipping.

“Technology is a tremendous enabler and a critical part of how we support our customers’ businesses,” says Tony Hollis, Saddle Creek’s director of technology and innovation, also based in Fort Worth. The best way Saddle Creek can support its customers is to continually wring inefficiencies out of its inbound and outbound operations. Multiple form factors are making that possible.

Ultra-rugged combination keypad/touch-screen handheld mobile computers enhance the efficiency of receiving, put-away, inventory and shipping processes that incorporate barcode scanning. The devices can scan barcodes as far away as 70 feet. It takes a lot less time to check item inventory on a high shelf from the floor than lowering its pallet prior to scanning, for example.

Lupe Ochoa, Saddle Creek's inventory control lead in Fort Worth, scans a barcode on a package, determines its correct warehouse location and checks product quantities at that location using a Zebra touch computer with the appearance of a ruggedized smartphone. She also prints barcode labels for inventory remotely using a mobile computer when necessary. "A handheld device makes it easier for me to print labels," she says. "I've worked here for almost two years. I have never printed an inaccurate barcode with a Zebra printer."

Saddle Creek also pairs rugged tablet computers with ultra-rugged extended-range scanners and mounting the solution on forklifts. The solution maintains efficiency when it's necessary to use a forklift in receiving, picking, inventory and shipping tasks. "Zebra rugged tablets have a nice balance of usability, performance and maintainability," Hollis says. "They're easy for associates to use and if we need to update or repair them, we can easily take them out of their mounts and temporarily replace them with other units."

Order picking, arguably the most repetitive scan-intensive task in any warehouse, offers opportunities to scale efficiency gains. Saddle Creek's warehouse associates gain efficiencies with touch computers that are ergonomically designed to reduce associates' wrist motion when they view the screen while picking and filling custom orders. The screens stay vertical during scans and fractions of a second add up for associates filling hundreds of orders during a shift. Reduced wrist flexing also keeps them comfortable and productive.

Associates who fill orders in pick-to-light processes use proximity scanners for hands-free scanning—drastically boosting efficiency. The combination of those scanners and industrial printers enables associates to quickly scan item barcodes, verify orders and print shipping labels.

In many cases, Saddle Creek adopts a form factor for one task and finds that it can add efficiency to others. That versatility is a good example of the unique value Saddle Creek gains from the Zebra solutions Peak-Ryzex provides and supports. "Zebra's devices have extended functionality," Hollis says. "As our business grows and evolves, we can take advantage of that functionality."

In a business that sees seasonal activity spikes, training efficiency matters, too. Adopting the touch computers and rugged tablets, which have familiar Android™ touch-screen user interfaces, pays off. "The Android user interfaces are intuitive and enable us to get temporary associates trained very quickly so we can process higher seasonal volumes," Hays says.



Peak-Ryzex offers Saddle Creek significant value beyond hardware. It also provides depot repair services for Saddle Creek’s mobile computers, barcode scanners and label printers as well as onsite services for label and laser printers. Additionally, “We use a managed service center to help them equip their solutions,” Hanson says. “For example, we take Zebra’s forklift-mounted rugged tablet solution, stage it and then we kit it with all the other pieces of equipment that make up the full solution.”

Further Automating Workflows

With e-commerce driving even greater order volume, Saddle Creek’s leadership is looking at further upgrades to keep up. The company will undertake a third modernization phase—partial automation of some workflows with robotics—in the coming years. For instance, using robots to travel between picking and packing areas will free associates to spend more time picking items for order fulfillment and less time walking. Robots will work side by side with Saddle Creek associates, who will continue to use Zebra scanning devices.

In this third phase and beyond, Peak-Ryzex will continue to rely on its partnership with Zebra to maximize productivity in Saddle Creek’s warehouses. “Zebra products are unique in the logistics and fulfillment industry because not only are they rugged and high-performing—they also add an extra level of innovation,” Hanson points out. “They actually engineer movement out of their products to make them more ergonomic and reduce fatigue for their users while saving time during their work tasks.”



To learn more visit zebra.com



NA and Corporate Headquarters
+1 800 423 0442
inquiry4@zebra.com

Asia-Pacific Headquarters
+65 6858 0722
contact.apac@zebra.com

EMEA Headquarters
zebra.com/locations
contact.emea@zebra.com

Latin America Headquarters
+1 786 245 3934
la.contactme@zebra.com