



SUMMARY



BEST SERVICE. BEST VALUE.

Customer

R.P. Lumber Company
Edwardsville, IL

Industry

Retail

Challenge

Deploy an automated data collection solution to expedite inventory counts in retail space that spans up to two acres.

Solution

- Zebra® ET50 enterprise tablet

Results

Based on real-use of the ET50 in 3 test stores:

- OPI provided R.P. Lumber with 70 Zebra ET50 tablets
- Labor costs reduced from five to six contracted workers to just one or two R.P. Lumber employees.
- Inventory reports are more timely and accurate.

RP Lumber

Automated data collection solution improves inventory control and fleet inspection for a large home center

Optical Phusion, Inc. (OPI) deployed Zebra ET50 rugged tablets at R.P. Lumber to replace a manual inventory count system in four of its expansive Illinois home centers and lumber yards.

Situation/challenge

With as much as two acres per site, monthly inventory counts at each store required five to six contracted workers conduct counts that took 48 hours to complete.

Solution

Littleton, MA-based Zebra Technologies partner OPI recommended the ET50 to provide a larger landscape for viewing inventory data. The multiple data capture features, scanner with advanced scanning engine, two cameras, and fast processing addressed the key challenges. In addition, the Windows platform provided the critical compatibility with their existing software.

Result

Inventory is conducted by one or two employees, instead of the contracted labor, resulting in substantial cost savings. The count is also completed in a few hours rather than two days, which provides more accurate and timely data.

Taking the hard work out of hardware inventory

Inventory control is critical to profitability. Accuracy is essential, too. A reliable inventory count can also take considerable time, which cuts into the productivity. R.P. Lumber, a full-service, retail home center, had been conducting their inventory counts using the manual method: pen and paper. When you're covering a showroom and warehouse that spans as much as two acres, one count can take 48 hours to complete. R.P. Lumber hired a team of workers just to do the inventory, in order to free up their staff for their other tasks.

Then, there's the problem of human error, both in counting and entering the data into the system. A manual method just doesn't deliver an accurate report.

With 70 stores through Illinois and 14 in Missouri, the cost of managing inventory was adding up to a considerable expense. When it was time to conduct inventory at one store, the manager had to track down one of the laptops that circulated from store to store.

CASE STUDY

CMAC TECHNOLOGY CAMPAIGN

Scanning and more

Randy Perry, R.P. Lumber's Senior Systems Analyst, went looking for an automated data collection solution. He reached out to Optical Phusion, Inc., a company that specializes in enterprise mobility for retail operations. Initially, Perry and Justin Patterson, IT Manager, had considered barcode scanners to increase the efficiency and accuracy of the inventory counts. In their discussion with Paul Rozak of OPI, they decided that a device with more functionality would deliver a better return on investment.

The Zebra ET50 enterprise tablet includes the features that R.P. Lumber prioritized—and more. The ET50's ruggedness could withstand the harsh environment of a lumber yard and home center, where the device is likely to be dropped, bumped, and potentially hit with water. The advanced scanning engines in this Zebra tablet present the same level of ease and accuracy as their dedicated barcode scanners. In addition, the extended battery life allows the ET50 to keep working through a full shift. The robust WLAN compatibility enables the tablet keeps connected, even in the most remote areas of the store's lumber yard and the ever-changing obstacles in the warehouse.

OPI also showed R.P. Lumber how the Zebra ET50 fit into the company's Windows-based enterprise software, making the deployment almost seamless. Patterson said that they appreciated the ease of use, particularly since some of the more seasoned employees weren't as technically savvy about mobile devices.

"The ET50 tablet was the right fit," explains Perry. "Not only does it easily do all the tasks we intended, but we've discovered even more uses."

A versatile solution

In addition to conducting inventory counts in R.P. Lumber's stores, the tablet has become a valuable tool for managing the company's fleet of trucks.

"We began using the tablet for vehicle inspections, to take photos of truck damage, deflated tires, and oil leaks," Patterson says. "It added even more value to the investment in these devices."

The ET50 is also used in one of the other companies under the R.P. Lumber corporate umbrella. Bluemark Property Management is adopting the technology, along with the AppFolio property management platform, to streamline the maintenance of the commercial properties. The enterprise tablets make it easy to monitor systems like HVAC units and respond quickly, an issue that had been a problem prior to discovering the ET50's versatility.

OPI has provided R.P. Lumber with 70 tablets, which are currently deployed in 4 stores. They will soon be rolling out the ET50 to more stores in their network. Bluemark Property Management currently utilizes 3 of the Android ET50s with a different application.

ROI of the ET50

Patterson estimates that the shift from manual to automated technology has reduced the man-hours for inventory counts from 5 to 6 contracted workers to just 1 or 2 employees. The insider perspective means that the workers know what they're looking for, which further expedites the process. With both inventory and vehicle inspection, he expects a 50% saving in labor alone. The increase in accuracy will certainly contribute to the ROI.

Optical Phusion works one-on-one with clients who need a customized technology solution that meets the demands of today's businesses. When you need a problem-solver with in-depth expertise, contact OPI.

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