

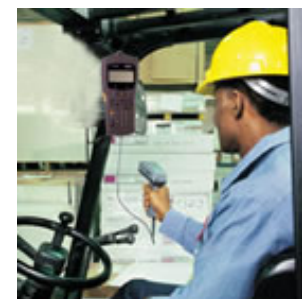
Kubota Plows New Ground In Inventory Control With Symbol and IMCORP



Kubota Manufacturing of America is the tractor manufacturing resource for Kubota Tractor. KMA is located on a 151 plus acre campus in scenic northern Georgia. Since opening its doors in 1988, the KMA campus now encompasses well over a million square feet of manufacturing warehouse and office space. With a product line that features innovative engineering, the highest quality standards and unsurpassed value, it's little wonder that KMA has experienced rapid and accelerating growth. The kind of growth that tests the mettle of people and systems.

As a result of their current and planned successes, KMA management recently decided that they needed to take their inventory management to the next level. With over 50,000 parts and assemblies passing through inventory, and the rapidly increasing size of their product line and facilities, it was decided there was an immediate need for real time inventory tracking. That decision being made, KMA IT and Materials management personnel enlisted the assistance of IMCORP, their solution oriented resource for data collection technology.

The challenge, as outlined by Materials Manager Mickey Lord, was to equip some 30 to 50 material handlers with the ability track the movement of raw material, parts and assemblies in real time. To make matters even more interesting, the objective was to be in production within a month. Having been there before, Lord had specific criteria in mind for the key elements of the system. He wanted wireless terminals that could be used by material handlers both on and off forklifts. With three and sometimes four high tiers of inventory bays, he had need of long range bar code scanners which would allow operators to reliably read location labels from ground level without sacrificing close in capability.



Because of Mickey's well defined criteria, IMCORP was able to quickly arrive at a recommended hardware solution consisting of Symbol Technologies PDT 6146 terminals and LS3200ER scanners. IMCORP also provided KMA personnel with test

location labels to enable them to quickly determine the efficacy of the LS3200ER scanners. "The 3200's proved so powerful that we were able to achieve reliable results using paper versus retro-reflective location labels. That saved us both time and money. With 25,000 storage locations to label, we needed to get started right away. Being able to use stock material allowed us to do that. Plus it's also much less expensive than the retro-reflective material we would have needed with a less powerful scanner.", said Lord.



The decision was also made to implement the application as a direct AS/400 application, using the Avalanche telnet client on the portable data terminals. The decision was made to also license the Avalanche Console. With the Avalanche console, terminal software can be managed and updated over the wireless network, again saving time, and shoe leather, especially in a facility the size of KMA.



With these decisions made, it was off to the races. IMCORP personnel immediately performed a site survey of KMA's premises to determine the optimum placement of Symbol's Spectrum 24™ 802.11b access points to assure full radio coverage. No sooner had an access point's location been determined by IMCORP personnel, KMA engineers were hanging the access points and antennae and running the network cable necessary to tie it into KMA's premises network. Fortunately, KMA was able to reduce installation time by eliminating the need to run power to each access point. Through the use of Symbol's Bias-T devices, power reaches the access points over the same network cable that carries data back and forth.

KMA IT and material handling personnel then began labeling warehouse locations, defining and implementing the software application, developing operator procedures and familiarizing themselves with their new wireless resources with the help of IMCORP Support Specialist, Joshua Needle.

Behind the scenes, IMCORP personnel were burning up the phone lines and scouring the Internet rounding up all the hardware and software components necessary for the application. "As it turned out, the terminal configuration that best met Kubota's requirements was not in stock in sufficient quantity at any single distributor. As a result, we ended up calling every major distributor in the country in order to round up the hardware Kubota needed to get going in the two weeks from start to deadline.", said Bob Lehman of IMCORP.

As a result of a collaborative effort between KMA and IMCORP, it all came together on schedule with the result being KMA is now enjoying the benefits of tighter control over its inventory.