

Leveraging Mobile Printers for Efficient DSD Operations



A ZEBRA WHITE PAPER






Copyrights

©2009 ZIH Corp. Zebra and the Zebra head graphic are registered trademarks of ZIH Corp. All rights reserved. Bluetooth is a registered trademark of Bluetooth SIG, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Unauthorized reproduction of this document or the software in the label printer may result in imprisonment of up to one year and fines of up to \$10,000 (17 U.S.C.506). Copyright violators may be subject to civil liability.



Mobile Printing for a Mobile Workforce

Direct store delivery (DSD) businesses that service a wide range of industries are looking for ways to improve efficiencies while boosting sales and enhancing the overall customer experience. In today's cost-conscious world, customers demand timely, precise deliveries from their service providers. A positive customer experience goes beyond a friendly, reliable face—accurate, efficient transactions will differentiate a DSD business from the competition.

In fact, the typical non-automated DSD process relies on manual data entry using pen and paper forms, burdening the delivery professional with error-prone transactions—reducing productivity and efficiency. In addition, many businesses depend on cumbersome printers that are fixed-mounted inside their delivery truck fleet. Consider the negative perception and the customer's time wasted whenever a driver must go back to the truck to generate a simple invoice.

Turn DSD Operations into Revenue Generators

DSD operations now carry corporate responsibility to generate revenue, and have moved beyond the cost of simply doing business. Mobile workforce managers are responding by requiring their staff to achieve high levels of productivity while providing additional services—especially during customer interaction.

The best way for mobile workers to meet the revenue challenge is to improve their efficiency by satisfying customer needs on the first visit, which minimizes follow-up or continued interaction with billing, sales, or customer service personnel.

For many businesses, applications that save time also lead to increased revenues. When freed up from tedious data entry, billing, and report preparation, DSD route drivers are able to spend more time with customers. Wireless-enabled mobile printers coupled with handheld computers are effective tools for providing these benefits.

“A printer is a key part of the driver's life. Drivers print invoices in every store they enter. At the end of the day when the driver returns, they will print load sheets, along with a recap of every sale made that day.”
—Charles Gaskamp, IT Manager, Blue Bell Creameries

Simplify DSD Tasks, Improve Business Processes

In many businesses, manual DSD processes force workers to print invoices at the warehouse the night before each route using centralized printers. If customers or drivers need to make any changes to orders on site, they must hand-write them on the pre-printed invoice, which often creates math errors, and raises concerns about correct pricing. Centralized, legacy printers often contain numerous moving parts, waste paper, and require frequent ribbon or printhead maintenance—adding significant workload to information technology (IT) departments.

Supporting DSD activity with mobile printing enables drivers to generate accurate, up-to-date orders, invoices, delivery receipts, settlement reports, and other documentation to help ensure accuracy and prevent time-consuming disputes. The time saved throughout the day accumulates, allowing drivers to make more deliveries per shift. In addition, drivers can spend more time on merchandising and sales, while IT departments can focus on positive business initiatives.



Understanding Mobile Printer Technology

Printers used in DSD operations are typically thermal models wearable on a belt, utility strap, or secured in the vehicle. Other printers include vehicle mounted ink jet or impact models. Thermal printers use heat to transfer the print image and have displaced impact as the dominant print technology used in DSD because of their outstanding reliability, ease of use, and superior total cost of ownership (TCO). Thermal printers are available to suit a variety of mobile operations, whether users prefer vehicle mounted or portable units, cable or wireless connectivity, and other features. Some mobile printers also support intelligent, remote management.

Mobile printers can print text, logos, graphics, and bar codes on durable receipts, and labels of different sizes and thicknesses. Some models have integrated magnetic stripe readers for payment card processing. The critical DSD printer performance criteria include durability, battery life and interface flexibility for use with mobile computers, cell phones, bar code scanners and other devices.

When integrated with a mobile, handheld computer and a wireless network, the benefits of mobile printing become apparent. At the start of the work shift, the distribution center can print load manifests for each route. While loading the products to be delivered, drivers can use the handheld computer to scan the inventory tag, ensuring that the inventory loaded on the truck and what's in the system and on the manifest match. This powerful capability can cut work shift inventory time in half, allowing distribution centers to build and load orders faster and more accurately.

Simplify Receipt and Order Management


In DSD operations, hard-copy receipts offer a vital tool for improving operational quality and efficiency. Route sales representatives can print delivery receipts and orders and review them with their customers—on the spot. This helps to ensure order accuracy and that customers are satisfied with the delivery. Reviewing receipts during the delivery process provides route sales representatives an opportunity to resolve discrepancies immediately, leading to a timely, cost-effective resolution.

After drivers deliver the product, they can print a receipt using the mobile printer, eliminating errors and illegible writing. As drivers interface with customers, they log order changes in their handhelds—and may take payments—ensuring that customer accounts receive updates accurately, in real time, and professionally.

Shrink the Invoicing and Payment Cycle

Printing invoices at the time of delivery helps provide a cash-cycle advantage because the route driver can accept payment on delivery. Many companies routinely wait 30 days or more to pay invoices. Delivering the invoice or requiring payment on delivery eliminates the billing lag time and invoice processing delays, significantly improving the business cash cycle.

Additionally, mobile printers with integrated credit card readers make it convenient and simple to accept payments and improve cash flow even further. On-site payment processing also helps reduce the resources needed to support DSD operations. The entire enterprise wins with mobile printing: Billing departments have fewer invoices to process, while customer service has fewer calls to resolve.



Zebra® Mobile Printers—Dependable and Flexible

Established with a proven record of success, Zebra offers a feature-rich selection of mobile printing solutions for DSD tasks. Designed to withstand the harsh requirements of DSD operations, Zebra printers deliver unmatched integration with a wide range of wireless networks, handheld devices, and data/management systems.

Rugged and Reliable

Centralized, fixed-location printers rarely encounter fluctuating temperatures, humidity, and vibration. However, mobile printers must endure the daily stress of varying environmental conditions, shock, and vibration. DSD workers need a mobile printing solution that functions reliably wherever, whenever.

Zebra delivers mobile printers that meet stringent IP54 dust and water resistance ratings. Zebra mobile printers can withstand the harsh demands of DSD and field service printing applications, including invoices, delivery receipts, service estimates, sales orders, and inventory management. Superior battery life, rugged construction, and flexible wireless technology serve as the cornerstone of Zebra mobile printer design.

With mobile printers, gone are the days when a driver wrote down the wrong delivery information. Today, drivers can depend on Zebra mobile printers to save them time with accurate receipts and invoices that do not smudge. After implementing the Zebra solution, World Fuels, a Chicago-area gasoline distributor, noticed a significant improvement in their billing process due to clear, error-free printing.

When using a combined mobile printer and handheld wireless solution, drivers can complete delivery route transactions quickly and conveniently. Mobile workers can issue invoices, print receipts, collect signatures, enter credits for returns, and accept payments on the spot, then communicate these transactions to the host system—expediting customer visits and improving service.

Seamless Integration Frees up IT Resources

By partnering with Zebra, businesses gain access to a team of technical experts that specialize in integration excellence. IT departments can achieve easy mobile printer integration with a wide range of applications and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. Seamless integration helps free up IT resources to focus on business initiatives and process improvements that can generate revenue.

Designed with common language support in mind, Zebra mobile printers enable users to print using the same commands as their legacy Zebra tabletop or desktop printers. While at the customer location, drivers can quickly and easily print complex labels, symbologies, and graphics that help differentiate their corporate identity.

Mobile printers from Zebra support a full range of wireless options through modular hardware, enabling anywhere, anytime communications. Businesses can choose the wireless connectivity that best suits their needs, including 802.11b/g, Bluetooth® 2.0, and dual radio support—for using Bluetooth and WLAN in the same printer. Because Zebra mobile printers support multiple wireless security and encryption standards, IT departments can feel confident that their networks and critical data remain secure.

Printer maintenance tasks can often burn up significant IT resources, hours better spent on proactive activities. With a high durability factor, Zebra mobile printers have repeatedly proven to lower the number of maintenance issues when compared to other solutions. As a result, IT departments can realize reduced maintenance workloads and operating expenses—while future-proofing their mobile printing infrastructure.



“With the old system it was difficult to decipher the drivers’ handwriting. Now, with Zebra mobile printers, all the printouts are clear and legible.”

—Andy Artzer, CIO, Charter Baking Company

Zebra Mobile Printers Deliver

When DSD businesses equip their delivery fleet with mobile printers, the entire enterprise acquires a unique solution that helps enable professional, accurate, and cost-effective operations. Delivery customers benefit from fast, accurate delivery transactions. Delivery providers benefit from the efficiencies of automation, lowered maintenance costs, and the opportunity for delivery professionals to focus on improving customer loyalty and sales. Zebra mobile printing solutions are ready today to help streamline DSD operations—from the source to the destination.

Zebra Technologies Corporation provides the broadest range of innovative technology solutions to identify, track, and manage the deployment of critical assets for improved business efficiency. Zebra’s core technologies include reliable on-demand printer and state-of-the-art software and hardware solutions. By enabling improvements in sourcing, visibility, security and accuracy, Zebra helps its customers to put the right asset in the right place at the right time. Zebra serves more than 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies worldwide. For more information about Zebra’s solutions visit www.zebra.com.





CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS
T: +1 800 423 0442
E-mail: inquiry4@zebra.com

ASIA-PACIFIC HEADQUARTERS
T: +65 6858 0722
E-mail: apacchannelmarketing@zebra.com

EMEA HEADQUARTERS
T: +44 1628 556000
E-mail: mseurope@zebra.com

LATIN AMERICA HEADQUARTERS
T: +1 847 955 2283
E-mail: inquiry4@zebra.com

www.zebra.com

OTHER LOCATIONS

USA California, Georgia, Rhode Island, Texas, Wisconsin EUROPE France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden ASIA-PACIFIC Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea LATIN AMERICA Argentina, Brazil, Florida (USA), Mexico AFRICA/MIDDLE EAST Russia, South Africa, United Arab Emirates

GSA#: GS-35F-0268N
©2009 ZIH Corp.
P1017039 (7/09)