


New Look shortens in-store tasks to a fraction of their original time with a Symbol solution

CASE STUDY

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Company	New Look, United Kingdom 
Industry	Retail
Symbol Solution	MC3000
Key Solution Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Central management• Voice over IP• Mobile printing
Partner Name	M-Netics
Solution	M-Netics' ISIS suite
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Efficient stock control• Flexible pricing control• Better customer service

The company: the third largest women's retailer

New Look has more than 550 stores in the UK and more than 200 in France. The New Look brand encompasses clothing, accessories, footwear and menswear. The company is committed to bringing the most up-to-date international fashion trends to women and men of all ages at very competitive prices.

The challenge: optimize in-store operations

Like many other retailers, New Look's key in-store operations, such as price markdowns, were reliant on paper-based systems, creating inevitable inaccuracies, delays and frustrations. The situation was exacerbated by New Look's successful growth, resulting in mushrooming inefficiency and an increasing administrative burden for store staff.

New Look established four objectives to address the situation:

- Replace the paper-based system with new technology
- Increase profitability and efficiency of in-store operations
- Provide an effective price management system
- Improve customer service

The solution: mobile store management

Working in partnership with M-Netics, a Symbol Premier Solution Partner, New Look devised a centrally managed IT solution to support in-store operations such as stock control and pricing.

New Look and M-Netics evaluated a number of in-store handheld terminals, involving a "real-life" pilot. The Symbol MC3000 handheld mobile computer was the unanimous choice, as it offered the best performance and technical architecture, in addition to being small, rugged, lightweight, and ergonomic.

The implementation took just 17 weeks in total during the first half of 2005. It included the creation of a wireless network across all UK stores, routed securely to a server cluster at New Look's headquarters in Weymouth, and the deployment of ISIS – M-Netics' modular retail software suite. ISIS supports all in-store functions of stock management, price management, customer service and management information as well as supporting Voice over IP and mobile printing.

The final part of the implementation was rolling out customized versions of over 1,300 Symbol MC3000 mobile handheld terminals. Designed for intuitive use, New Look was able to get store staff using the Symbol MC3000 immediately with just a simple training video.

Ongoing support is provided by M-Netics through its ServiceTrak Web portal.

The benefits: simplified price management, faster sales preparation

The centralized network architecture enables maximum network control and security while minimizing capital outlay at the store level. All information resides on three servers in Weymouth, with data being captured on the handheld terminals and being directly transmitted to the servers. The rugged, Symbol mobile handheld computers are installed with software applications that make implementing software upgrades straightforward.

Preparation for sales, including price markdowns were traditionally performed manually, but are now done in a fraction of the time and with increased accuracy. The Symbol terminals allow staff more time to spend on the shop floor dealing with customers and giving instant responses to such requests as stock availability.

Stock management efficiency gains have been considerable in terms of allowing staff to help customers on the shop floor instead of having their time occupied with stock room activity. In the majority of stores the stock room is away from the shop floor and searching for items was tedious and time consuming. Now the user simply scans an item and stock availability by size and color is instantly displayed.

The use of the new solution has enabled instant answers to customers' price check and availability requests, giving customers a better level of service as well as freeing up staff and therefore keeping them available on the shop floor.

The Symbol MC3000 has also transformed New Look's price markdowns. The simplicity of scanning an item and seeing real-time price modifications empowers shop floor staff to effectively manage what was a complex paper based process.

"New Look is delighted with the Symbol enterprise mobility solution that has provided increased productivity for our store staff who can now simply scan an item and find out product availability by size and colour instead of searching through the stock room," said Phil King, Project Manager of New Look. "Our staff feels that the Symbol MC3000 mobile computer is the best equipment provided to them to do the job."

Future plans

New Look is looking to add more functionalities to the Symbol MC3000 in the future. "The Symbol terminals have already transformed the process of price management in store, and our staff love them. Preparation for sales, including price markdowns, is now done in a fraction of the time with increased accuracy, and customers can get instant response on stock availability. This is only the beginning for us, with a number of new initiatives already at the specification stage, and more in the pipeline," said King, adding: "The technology will allow for perpetual inventory counting to improve the replenishment of high turnover, fast turning stock packages, and there are plans to extend the stock-checking functionality into its distribution processes."

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