

## Logistics Technology: Competitive Advantages of a Stronger Bottom Line

In many industries, the addition of more efficient technologies can improve competitive advantage and profitability, even when profit margins are narrow. And this is especially true for logistics businesses, long-haul trucking, local delivery, third-party logistics or direct store delivery — improved margins can make the difference between success and mere survival. The company with the profit margin advantage is frequently the company that expands, increases customer satisfaction and gains market share.

Technologies that make "on the road" logistics companies more efficient are critical to improving margins. The ability to collect data instantly and accurately, and then transmit that data back to the central database, in real-time, is leading more and more logistics oriented firms to reduce or eliminate paper-intensive processes.

### Bar Codes for Increased Productivity and Efficiency



Bar code scanning is a successful business tool because it dramatically improves efficiency through error-free data collection and reduced paperwork. The days of the route salesperson or trucker carrying a clipboard full of forms are over. No more illegible notes, no more rain- or snow-smudged documents and no more key entry errors at the end of the route. Bar code scanning allows fleets to systematically and logically collect data. And once this data is transmitted back to the central database, it is accessible to management for inventory updates, revenue recognition and review of customer service status logs.

Route drivers using handheld mobile computers from Symbol Technologies are able to scan bar codes on the individual items or crates of deliverables at a customer site, and again when unloading the goods. Once the customer receives the shipment, the route driver prints a receipt using a portable printer. Then the driver enters the customer's stockroom or retail floor to scan bar coded items that are near depletion, for restocking in the next delivery. Using these advanced technology tools, the route driver or salesperson records data in seconds — a task that would take several minutes if done on paper. The data collected with the bar code scanner is error-free and reduces the potential for delivery errors, sustaining and improving customer satisfaction.

### Transform Your Vehicles into Mobile Workstations

Using the Mobile Gateway Plus (MG-Plus) from Symbol Technologies, the data collected at the customer's site is transmitted via wireless wide area networks (WWAN) or satellite communications back to the central database or home office. This information is used to update the company's revenue and distribution center records. The transaction data is also used to update inventory levels and to queue procurement personnel to pick and expedite the next order to be delivered to the customer.

The MG-Plus installs in truck cabs and is compatible with Symbol's rugged handheld computers and wireless communications technology. There's ample room on-board for application storage and data backup. Using this technology, you can improve your motor freight, parcel delivery or private fleet operations quickly. The MG-Plus empowers your route drivers to gather and communicate mission-critical information in real time, from the road or the customer's site back to headquarters. Some of the key benefits include:



- › Reduced bottlenecks in driver queues at the beginning and end of the day
- › Fewer accounting errors
- › Speedy, efficient end-of-day settlements
- › Easy to read, accurate invoices that include all last-minute adjustments
- › Up-to-the-minute truck inventories

It's important that any on-board technology products you choose meet the best practices assigned by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE). This organization has developed a variety of protocols that enable vehicle-monitoring codes to be transmitted to computers via the vehicle's computer system. One of the standards, J-1708, defines the kind of serial data communication link that may be used in heavy-duty vehicle applications. The J-1708 standard allows for "flexibility in expansion and technological advancements with minimum hardware and software impact on in-place assemblies." The MG-Plus in-vehicle computer includes the ability to connect to the vehicle data bus using the SAE standard J-1708 protocol.

### Strengthen Your Bottom Line for Strategic Advantage

Symbol handheld mobile computers and the MG-Plus enable your business to improve efficiency, realize greater productivity, increase customer satisfaction and facilitate the timely flow of critical business data — resulting in a stronger bottom line. Consider this simple calculation: if your company has 10, 100 or 1,000 vehicles, and you saved 5 minutes per customer delivery, how many additional accounts would your route drivers handle every week? If the right tools and technology increase the number of deliveries per truck by even one stop per day, think of how this translates into greater profits, expanded business and competitive advantage.