

# American Furniture Warehouse enables managers to pocket their desktop tools for increased efficiency and productivity

## CASE STUDY

### CUSTOMER PROFILE

<b>Company</b>	American Furniture Warehouse, the largest furniture retailer in Colorado and the 21st largest furniture retailer in the U.S. 
<b>Industry</b>	Retail
<b>Challenge</b>	Improve the efficiency and productivity of managers
<b>Solution</b>	Symbol's MC50 Enterprise Digital Assistant, Nortel's Business Communication Manager
<b>Benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved productivity of managers – now able to spend 100 percent of their time supervising the sales floor</li><li>• Improved customer service</li><li>• Reduction in capital and operational costs due to convergence of voice, data and bar code scanning into a single device</li></ul>

### Company overview

American Furniture Warehouse is the largest furniture retailer in Colorado. Headquartered in Englewood, Colorado, the company currently has ten stores throughout the state, with \$350 million in annual sales. Combined warehouse and showroom space in each location ranges from 100,000 to 635,000 square feet. In 31 years of doing business, the company has grown into one of the largest furniture retailers in the country. A newly launched Interior Design service offers an added value, assisting the company's customers with the selection of furniture and accessories to create complete rooms. President and CEO Jake Jabs attributes the company's incredible success story to "the basic American philosophy of hard work, the courage to take risks, and the desire to give value and service to every customer."

### The challenge: mobilizing the desktop computer and phone

American Furniture Warehouse was looking to leverage integrated mobile voice and data to improve the accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness of store managers. Each location has three to four managers, and each manager is responsible for supervising 60 to 70 salespeople. But the tools required to perform daily tasks kept managers tethered to the desk instead of out on the sales floor managing their staff. The desktop computer was required to access the company intranet to check inventory and pricing, answer email and access other computer productivity applications, and the deskphone was required to place and return phone calls. The company was looking for a way to mobilize the desk tools to enable managers to remain on the sales floor throughout the day.

### The solution: integrated mobile voice and data

The company armed managers in each location with the ideal mobile management tool, Symbol's MC50. The integration of voice and data on a small, lightweight PDA-style device enabled the company to put the power of a desktop computer, scanner and desk phone right in the pockets of sales managers. Support for 802.11b enabled seamless integration with the company's existing wireless LAN, delivering real-time anywhere anytime voice and data communications. And integration of the Business Communications Manager (BCM) switch from Nortel provides one of the industry's largest portfolio of telephony features, including the ability to extend desk phone functionality to mobile devices. Now, the need to return to the desk throughout the day is eliminated — right from the sales floor, managers can:

- Access everyday business applications, such as Microsoft® Word and Microsoft Excel®, to view work schedules and delivery manifests



When American Furniture Warehouse empowered sales managers in their ten store locations with mobile voice and data, productivity of the entire sales function dramatically improved.

- Access the company's intranet, where the inventory database, payroll, forms and more are housed
- Access email, a critical application heavily used throughout the day for a wide range of communications with many associates and customers
- Scan shelf tags to check or change pricing
- Place and receive phone calls, with full desk phone functionality via Nortel's Business Communication Manager (BCM), over the company's wireless LAN
- Automatically receive calls to the desk phone on the MC50, ensuring that important calls are always answered promptly

The MC50 was selected for its slim PDA-styling, durability for all-day use on the sales floor, and powerhouse of enterprise functionality, including:

- The latest in processing power to enable enterprise applications
- The Microsoft Windows Mobile™ operating system for ease in connectivity to back end systems as well as the ability to run popular desktop applications
- Robust Voice over WLAN (VoWLAN) functionality, including PBX connectivity, push-to-talk, peer-to-peer, 1-to-1 and 1-to-many
- 802.11b wireless networking for anytime anywhere voice and data communications

- The durability required to endure everyday use out on the sales floor and out in the field, distinguishing it from consumer style PDAs
- High quality audio functionality for superior voice quality and clarity
- Advanced power management, which ensures more than adequate talk time and battery power for a full shift

The BCM switch from Nortel offered all the business voice functionality the company needed, including the ability to extend full desk phone functionality to the MC50 via the company's wireless LAN. Regardless of whether a call is answered on the MC50 or the desk phone, managers enjoy the same functionality, including:

- Abbreviated extension dialing
- Redial
- Call transfer
- Caller ID
- Call pick-up
- Call hold
- Desk phone to mobile phone roaming
- One voicemail box for all business messages — regardless of whether the message is left on the desk phone or the MC50
- One phone number to manage — since calls to the desk phone also ring on the MC50, managers enjoy mobile phone functionality, without the hassle of having to manage two phone numbers (desk and mobile)

...and more.

*"Thanks to mobility, our managers are a lot more productive, and the same sales staff can handle more customers yet deliver better service. In the cut-throat furniture industry, it is mobility that gives us a real competitive advantage — more efficient staff that has the time and the information to deliver a superior customer experience."*

— Chris Fischer, IT Manager, American Furniture Warehouse

## The benefits: increased productivity and improved customer service

By mobilizing managers with integrated voice and data communications, American Furniture Warehouse is enjoying a number of benefits:

Completely freed from their desks, now managers are out supervising sales personnel and the sales floor 100% of the time, and no longer need to return to the desk to check stock, access a form, check work or delivery schedules, and more. Manager productivity has dramatically increased — along with the productivity of sales staff.

The customer experience is improved. Sales staff can reach managers quickly and easily with a quick phone call when questions or issues arise — customers are not kept waiting. And since managers can now be easily reached by phone, the constant disruptive and annoying overhead paging is now eliminated.

Capital and operational expense is reduced, since the MC50 provides the functionality of three devices — a mobile computer, a bar code scanner and a mobile phone. The need to purchase, manage and support multiple devices is eliminated.

And finally, the ability to fully leverage the existing telephony investment further improved the return on investment for the Nortel BCM.

Said Chris Fischer, IT Manager of American Furniture Warehouse, "Thanks to mobility, our managers are a lot more productive, and the same sales staff can handle more customers yet deliver better service. In the cut-throat furniture industry, it is mobility that gives us a real competitive advantage — more efficient staff that has the time and the information to deliver a superior customer experience."

### For more information

For more information on how Symbol's converged voice and data solutions can add value throughout your enterprise, contact us at +1.800.722.6234 or +1.631.738.2400, or visit us on the Web at [www.symbol.com/voice](http://www.symbol.com/voice)

## MC50



Symbol's MC50 Enterprise Digital Assistant (EDA) provides powerful productivity tools in a durable PDA-style device designed for enterprise use. The first in its class, the MC50 offers voice communications, bar code scanning, imaging, signature capture, and support for email and calendar applications as well as key business applications, such as inventory and pricing databases.

In a retail environment, store managers are always available by phone. Fixed mobile convergence allows the extension of the same features on the desk phone to the MC50. Bar code scanning enables on-the-spot price audits. Image capture provides an instant record of the state of returned merchandise — or a damaged shipment.

And unlike consumer style PDAs, the MC50 is designed from the inside out to deliver the durability required to handle daily high-volume usage — from the internal antenna that eliminates a common area of vulnerability to the keypad, battery contacts and more. For more information about the MC50, visit us on the Web at [www.symbol.com/MC50](http://www.symbol.com/MC50)

## About Symbol Technologies

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