



Driving supply chain efficiency with next-generation Zebra scanners

- 30% reduction in scanner fleet cuts costs
- Improves battery life and WiFi signal
- Simplifies device management tasks

COMPANY & CHALLENGE

Covering 50,000 square metres, the European Distribution Centre (EDC) at Bergen op Zoom in the Netherlands is the centre of operations for Ricoh Europe Supply Chain Management (SCM). Every day, more than 300 employees manage incoming and outgoing product shipments at the site, using WiFi-connected handheld barcode scanners to track items from the moment of arrival to final dispatch.

Pieter Willemse, Business IT Operations Team Lead at Ricoh Europe SCM, explains: “Without the handheld scanners, our supply chain operations would come to a standstill. Previously, we used more than 210 devices at the EDC, including three different models for long- and short-range barcode scanning. Inevitably, it was time-consuming and complex for our IT team to manage and update this mix of different devices.”

The old scanners created operational challenges, too. For example, batteries rarely lasted for a full shift, requiring employees to leave their post to re-charge or change devices. The WiFi connection of the scanners was often patchy, and battery clips were easily damaged, leading to high replacement costs. And sourcing accessories to store the devices, such as holsters and mounted brackets, proved difficult.



SOLUTION

More robust scanners minimise breakage

To drive productivity in the EDC, Ricoh Europe SCM looked to consolidate and simplify the handheld scanner fleet. Initially, the company prepared an inventory of current devices and engaged stakeholders from its warehouse operations team, IT Service Desk, and logistics partner DHL, to review new models. Following on-site testing, the company selected Zebra MC3300ax scanners supplied by Ricoh Netherlands, plus accessories, including forklift-mounted brackets, holsters, screen protectors, spare batteries, and four-slot chargers.

Pieter Willemse continues: “Our users preferred the ergonomics and weight of the Zebra scanners, which felt more balanced in the hand than other options. Crucially, Zebra could provide one model with integrated long-, medium-, and short-range scanning functionality, which would reduce the complexity of the fleet.”

Working closely with a long-term technology partner, Ricoh Europe SCM configured and rolled out the Zebra devices at the EDC. Moving forward, the company will benefit from a managed service delivered by the partner and Zebra, covering security updates, break/fix support, and ongoing reporting.

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Our employees are scanning thousands of barcodes every day, and the new devices knock off a second or so every time. When you add up all of the time saved, it makes a big improvement to productivity across the supply chain.

PIETER WILLEMSE
BUSINESS IT OPERATIONS TEAM LEAD

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“Whenever a user misplaces a device somewhere in the EDC, we can now send a message to the scanner, which emits a loud sound until we locate it. This will help to minimise losses and replacement costs.”

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BUSINESS IT OPERATIONS TEAM LEAD



“We can track usage and take proactive steps to maintain and optimise the performance of the Zebra devices,” explains Pieter Willemse.

The Zebra scanners represent a major step forward at the EDC. Where the old devices ran on the now discontinued Windows CE operating system, the Zebra scanners use Android, support next-generation WiFi 6 standards, and help to increase the performance of critical warehouse management systems.

“The Zebra devices provide stronger WiFi signal and much longer battery lifespan,” adds Pieter Willemse. “They are simpler to operate, too. With the old scanners, it was easy to put in the batteries incorrectly, which caused long-term damage to the clips. Over time, we had to replace around half the batteries, increasing our running costs. With the Zebra scanners, the battery slots straight in, reducing the risk of damage.”

In addition, the Zebra devices provide a platform for ongoing innovation at the EDC. For example, Ricoh Europe SCM is exploring using the integrated camera on the scanners to take pictures of shipments prior to dispatch, before uploading the images to DocuWare and sending them to customers. If the shipment arrives damaged, the company will be able to prove that tampering occurred during transit rather than at the EDC.

Pieter Willemse continues: “Another valuable feature of the new Zebra scanners is remote tracking. Whenever a user misplaces a device in the EDC, we can now send a message to the scanner, which emits a loud sound until we locate it. This will help to minimise losses and replacement costs.”

BENEFITS

Faster scanning lifts productivity

With the Zebra devices, Ricoh Europe SCM has successfully consolidated and modernised the scanner fleet at the EDC. Using one model with comprehensive functionality eliminates the need for three separate devices, enabling a reduction in overall numbers of almost 30 percent—from 211 to 150. As a result, the company has cut its energy consumption and charging and licensing costs, and improved environmental performance. And training employees at the EDC to use the single standard scanner model is much quicker and simpler than when using three different devices.

Pieter Willemse continues: “Managing and maintaining the slimmed-down scanner fleet is much easier for our IT team. Previously, we had to update three different software profiles whenever there was a change in barcode processes, a security upgrade, or a new WiFi configuration. Now, we have one profile for all 150 Zebra devices, and we can roll out updates much faster, saving us valuable time and resources.”



The Zebra scanners have also had a positive impact on efficiency within the EDC. For example, the stronger WiFi signal means users no longer lose time during their shift trying to re-connect faulty devices. Similarly, the extended battery lifespan and integrated short- and long-range scanning functionality in one flexible scanner model eliminate the need for employees to step away from their work to re-charge or collect a different device model to perform new tasks in different departments of the EDC.

“The Zebra scanners are much faster than the old models,” explains Pieter Willemse. “Our employees are scanning

thousands of barcodes every day, and the new devices knock off a second or so every time. When you add up all of the time saved, it makes a big improvement to productivity across the supply chain.”

He concludes: “We will build on the rollout of Zebra scanners at the EDC at our other EMEA locations, including Sweden, Turkey, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. At each site, there is an opportunity to consolidate and streamline the handheld scanner fleet, which will unlock cost and efficiency benefits. The Zebra project has been very successful, enabling us to operate more efficiently at Bergen op Zoom.”

ABOUT RICOH

Ricoh is a leading provider of integrated digital services and print and imaging solutions designed to support digital transformation of workplaces, workspaces and optimise business performance. Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh's global operation reaches customers in approximately 200 countries and regions, supported by cultivated knowledge, technologies, and organisational capabilities nurtured over its 85-year history. In the financial year ended March 2024, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 2,348 billion yen (approx. 15.5 billion USD). It is Ricoh's mission and vision to empower individuals to find Fulfilment through Work by understanding and transforming how people work so we can unleash their potential and creativity to realise a sustainable future. For further information, please visit: www.ricoh-europe.com

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