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KEMIRA ENJOYS 10% PRODUCTIVITY GAINS FROM SWITCHING TO THE INTERMEC EX25 SCAN ENGINE

Kemira has selected the groundbreaking CK31ex with the EX25 scan engine and PX4i and PM4i printers for a large-scale global rollout across 33 plants in 17 countries.

Kemira is a large chemicals group operating globally, with plants and warehouses in 40 countries and employing over 9,000 staff. The company is divided into four business units: Kemira Pulp and Paper, Kemira Water, Kemira Specialty and Kemira Coatings. In 2006, Kemira recorded revenue of around €2.5 billion.

Kemira’s chemical offerings range from titanium dioxide pigments, organic acids and acid derivatives to bleaching chemicals for detergents. The industrial chemicals market is highly demanding, with important multi-national customers that require very specific components and materials, where accuracy and availability of information is always of paramount importance. Kemira has a long-standing commitment to technological innovation and constantly strives to improve its processes.

CHALLENGE

With several thousand tons of raw materials and manufactured goods moving in and out of each plant on a daily basis, Kemira’s global network requires accurate logistical alignment to avoid costly and potentially dangerous mistakes. The chemicals group recently consolidated its computer systems under its OneKem initiative, facilitating shared data access and enabling its businesses to better interact with each other.

Continuing this innovative reform program, the next step for Kemira is to implement a system able to accurately capture data at various stages of the supply chain. Strict criteria for this system were outlined, such as standardized products across all plants and the ability for vendors to provide service support globally. “We needed a system that can scan large amounts of data accurately and quickly,” explains Todd King, Barcode Process Owner at Kemira.

SOLUTION

After thorough research of the market, Kemira selected Intermec’s CK31ex with the EX25 scan engine as the cutting-edge solution to meet its strict requirements. Past experience with older scanners had left Kemira employees with the problem of requiring multiple scans before information was captured. The EX25 is designed to eliminate time wasted from failed readings with the world’s first autofocus area imager. As the only scan engine capable of capturing 1D and 2D codes from close up to distances of up to 50 feet, the EX25 can read barcodes in any orientation and decode 2D barcodes as small as 4 millimeters. This saves workers from having to move the object or twisting their wrists to capture the data, saving valuable time and reducing fatigue and injury.

Kemira first tested the EX25’s abilities at its finished goods warehouse at Tiel in The Netherlands. “We found the ability to read barcodes from any distance combined with the capacity to read them from many different angles had the effect of rapidly speeding up our processes,” remarks King. “This can prove crucial in a warehouse environment where the main aim is to get things out of the door as soon as possible. The quicker we can get a reading the faster the process will be.”

RESULTS

The pilot program at Tiel produced impressive results, with the EX25 demonstrating its ability to provide considerable productivity gains, resulting in easier and faster operation and reduced workloads. The reader accuracy also ensured reliable data capture for more efficient inventory and material searches. EX25’s ability to scan from any distance up to 50 feet meant each forklift driver saved as much as one hour per day. Fewer employees were needed for receiving and picking goods in the warehouse, resulting in additional cost savings. Similar results were also achieved in Tiel’s spare parts division.

In addition to the impressive productivity benefits, the CK31ex provides an all-in-one device which eliminates the need for multiple units, substantially reducing the total cost of ownership and increasing user productivity. A special lighting system also allows the EX25 to easily read 1D and 2D barcodes in poor light conditions and even in total darkness.

"We evaluated different barcode scanners and technologies and were very impressed with the EX25's ability to read barcodes from a distance and from any orientation, which benefits our workers more than anything else we've found," comments King. "In a large warehouse where items are stacked high on shelves, it helps to be able to scan from an angle. The best thing about the EX25 is that it gives us a clean scan from wherever we stand in the warehouse."

Kemira has also selected Intermec's PX4i and PM4i printers to support its new scanning system. These rugged, high performance printers are designed to excel in demanding environments, providing the necessary barcode labels to facilitate large-scale processing and distribution. Kemira no longer needs to purchase special labels, which can be as much as ten times more expensive, as the EX25 can read 1D and 2D barcodes printed on normal, nonreflective paper labels.

The PX series' ability to print up to 12 inches of labels per second translates to further time savings, with Kemira able to transfer more orders simultaneously. As this is the first time Kemira has implemented a global barcode project, the chemicals giant needed the confidence that only an experienced and trustworthy technology provider could bring to the table. King adds: "The global service support was a key factor for us choosing Intermec. The Medallion Complete Service gave us the support levels we required due to the implementation at chemical plants across the globe."

The next step for Kemira in its international roll-out is in the US at its Marietta, Georgia facility. The number of data errors is expected to go down significantly due to the advanced barcode technology and the automation of data processes. King states, "We look forward to implementing Intermec's system across our network, and after Marietta there are 12 other plants in the US lined up that we are keen to upgrade. This is an important project for the company and we are eager to see the benefits of it as soon as possible. Worldwide we plan on rolling out the project to over 40 warehouses in 17 countries."

After global implementation at each warehouse, Kemira has calculated that it can expect a 10% increase in worker efficiency through the expected time savings and increased productivity this new technology will bring.

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