

Xplore's iX104C2D Tablet PCs Keep Axles In Motion



ArvinMeritor, listed on the New York Stock Exchange, is an \$8 billion supplier to the global motor vehicle industry. They have approximately 31,000 employees in 25 countries, and participate in 24 joint ventures in 12 of those countries. The company's product portfolio includes integrated systems, modules and components for light vehicle, truck, trailer and specialty equipment OEMs and the commercial aftermarket. ArvinMeritor products are part of virtually every vehicle on the road today.

The ArvinMeritor plant in Lyon (western France) was established in 1970. Today, this plant is producing trailer axles for trucks and employs 700 people. Approximately 500 axles are produced at the plant daily for companies such as Renault and Volvo. Once the axle is completed on the manufacturing line, a forklift equipped with a rugged mobile computer selects the part from the production line and transfers it to an outdoor warehouse at a designated location. ArvinMeritor originally equipped their forklifts with rugged DOS-based computers and wanted to upgrade them to modern computers running a Windows operating system. Other requirements included reliability and ruggedness, as forklift-mounted computers are subjected to heavy, constant vibration. Since the forklifts are also used outdoors, the computing system

must survive in various temperatures and weather conditions. *"The temperatures in the forklift cabin can become very high. There is also plenty of dust; the environment is very industrial and the operators often keep the forklift windows open, so the computer needs to be properly sealed"*, clarifies Gabriel Parron, Logistics Manager from the ArvinMeritor plant in Lyon.

After an evaluation period, Xplore's iX104C2D Tablet PC, with active xDock vehicle docking system introduced by Raisonance S.A., a specialist in automatic identification and systems integration, was selected as a hardware platform for the forklifts at the ArvinMeritor plant. The Xplore tablets are an ideal solution for the warehouse application, as they have been engineered, 3rd party tested, and are warranted to military standards (MILSTD 810F) for environmental extremes. The advanced docking system allows quick removal if needed, but the tablet can also be locked to the cradle to prevent unauthorized removal. ArvinMeritor uses the tablets primarily as forklift-mounted computers and usually has no need to remove the system from the forklift. The software developed by Groupe Silicomp has large icons on the display, which the user operates with finger touch. The forklift operator can view the work schedules on the tablet, which is connected to the wireless local area network at the plant. The work order will either be an axle transfer from the production line to the warehouse, or fulfillment of a customer order, when the forklift will select the required item from the outdoor warehouse and deliver it to the dispatch truck. The system allows the company access to real-time data on storage locations and inventory levels.



"We were not using a paper-based system to carry out the selection process before the Xplore tablets were deployed; we had outdated, forklift-mounted computers. The major advantage for us is the new, faster overall system enabling efficiency in our warehouse management processes", says Parron and continues: *"A well-run warehouse must have a reliable computing system that enables real-time communication between various work groups who manage successive processes such as manufacturing personnel and forklift operators."*