



CASE STUDY

Warehousing

Valeo Service Upgrades with Rugged Xplore Tablets

Valeo, headquartered in France, is focused on the design, production and sale of components, systems and modules for cars and trucks. It ranks among the world's top automotive suppliers and serves all major vehicle manufacturers. Valeo Service is a branch of the group. It markets a wide range of Valeo products for dealerships, distribution centers and garages in more than 100 countries throughout the world. Valeo Service employs 1,120 people in 34 sales offices and 9 distribution platforms in 18 countries.

The distribution center for Valeo Service in Breuilpont, France (an hour's drive from Paris), stocks nearly 20,100 different spare parts such as vehicular batteries, windshield wipers, lights and radiators. The Breuilpont facility ships parts against wholesale customer orders throughout the country. Larger parts are picked by forklifts; smaller items are collected on the picking line. Each picking line is equipped with three picking trolleys. Tablet computers are mounted on the trolleys to enable the picker to view and complete customer orders. Valeo Service had been using semi-rugged devices for this function for a few years, but wished to upgrade the system with a truly robust solution due to the high failure level and continuous maintenance required.



Raisonnance S.A. introduced Xplore's rugged iX104RD Tablet PCs to Valeo Service, which the company evaluated among a few other devices. After a pilot period, the Xplore tablets were selected as a hardware platform mounted on the pick-up trolleys, due to their ultimate ruggedness. The 10.4" display size is also ideal for the selection purpose. The earlier devices had a smaller display, so now users enjoy better readability of the customer orders with the Xplore tablets. It was also important to Valeo Services that the antennas for wireless connections be embedded in the system. The earlier devices they used had exposed external antennas that were prone to damage. The iX104 Tablet PC can accommodate both integrated wLAN and wWAN capability. "We opted for the Xplore solution for

several reasons, including ease in mounting and connecting our existing trolley carts and peripherals, Xplore's overall compatibility with our system, the equipment durability and the technical support provided by Raisonnance in the installation process," explains Jean Philippe Monrat, the IT manager from Valeo Service in Breuilpont and continues: "At our plant, reliable connection from the picking line computers to the secure wireless local area network is important, so that the pickers can access the customer orders and the stock level is automatically updated

real-time." The systems' full integration with SAP provides instant inventory record updates occurring simultaneously with the wireless transactions. Raisonance S.A. provided systems integrator services for the deployment and ensured that the wireless network interacts seamlessly.

A reliable mounting system for the picking trolleys and connectivity to peripherals was important for the customer. Xplore offers a wide range of various docking and mounting solutions, from which a suitable mounting kit was selected for the picking trolleys. The tablets are mounted to an active xDock docking system, where a laser detector, bar code scanner and numeric keyboard are connected. Once a container, where the items for the customer are deposited, arrives on the conveyor to the picking trolley, the laser detector on the trolley activates the system. The picker collects the item from the warehouse shelf according to the customer order shown on the Tablet PC, scans the barcode on the item and places the item in the container. The container will then travel to the next picking line, where another picker will continue processing the customer order with items stored on that picking line.



An improved selection process in the spare parts distribution center was critical to the operational efficiency that Valeo Service wished to achieve. Even if a computerized solution was used before, the previous hardware was not robust enough to survive in a warehouse environment. *"Our main objective was to find a reliable system that will survive in the warehouse environment, and after using the tablets for several months now, we seem to have achieved our goal"*, concludes Monrat.