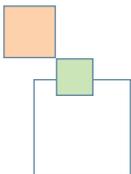# A bit of Spirit helps Liffe to run more smoothly!

Many different data capture applications are based around barcode scanning technology. Sometimes, a project will need several different scanning devices to cover various activities. When Liffe's Commodity Derivatives department embarked upon a new, wide-ranging project recently, it decided to source all of its handheld units from one supplier – Spirit Data Capture Limited.

Liffe is the international derivatives business of NYSE Euronext, and offers one of the broadest ranges of exchange traded derivatives in the world on its electronic trading system, LIFFE CONNECT®. As well as trading equities and fixed income products, there are a broad range of commodity products traded at Liffe, including cocoa, white sugar, raw sugar, feed wheat, milling wheat, rapeseed, rapeseed oil and corn.

Grading is one of the key services provided by Liffe to support the trading of Commodities. The grading service determines the quality of goods that can be delivered via the market. It takes samples from the goods stored in regulated warehouses (predominately in Northern Europe) and subjects them to analysis and inspection processes within the Grading Room, which is based in London. The results from this grading process will determine whether any allowances or premiums are due to the purchaser of the goods on delivery ▶

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DATA CAPTURE LTD

Case Study

The current service does not allow for any sample tracking from the warehouses to the London Grading Room and requires a significant amount of information to be re-keyed. To streamline the whole process of tracking these samples, Liffe decided to invest in a range of data capture devices.

Gary Jordan, Project Manager for Liffe Guardian, Liffe's new commodity management system, explains: "We were looking for a selection of barcode technologies that could be used in the warehouse, for stock control, for tracking goods and by our Field Service Engineers. These would form part of a much larger, pan-European system."

Many of the division's processes are supported by barcoding. Liffe therefore started exploring handheld devices that could speed up the sample handling procedure. The company takes samples from cocoa and coffee stored around the world. The sample bags are barcoded and shipped to a grading room and then to grading stations. A professional grader checks the quality of each sample, scans the barcode on the bag and then adds the grading data.

Gary remarks: "We didn't want multiple suppliers for this project, so we started looking for a company that could provide all of our scanning needs and could act as an interface with different manufacturers. It would also have to be able to understand our business and the specific requirements we have. We subsequently came across Spirit through a reference call."

As Spirit Data Capture is an independent mobile computing consultancy, it was able to source all of the barcode scanning and printing technology that Liffe needed. Spirit proposed options from two or three manufacturers. Gary Jordan continues: "We chose several different Motorola devices as they are a leading supplier and their products met our criteria."

Motorola's MC35 Enterprise Digital Assistant was chosen for use by the Field Service Engineers as it is pocket-sized but very durable. It offers full wireless networking capabilities, as well as image capture and barcode scanning. The engineers use the devices to scan samples and to retrieve live data from the division's database via GPRS.

Liffe selected the Motorola MC70 for use in its Grading Room in London. This compact but rugged handheld mobile unit incorporates functions such as a mobile phone, PDA, computer, scanner, GPS, biometrics and an imager. The company also opted for the more powerful MC9090 for its stock personnel. The 9090 is a versatile mobile computer

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that is ideal for intensive barcode scanning operations.

The final handheld terminal chosen was the Motorola LS2208 barcode scanner, which delivers high levels of performance combined with excellent reliability. Suited to light scanning applications, the LS2208 is a desktop device that plugs into a PC. The model has been installed at Liffe's grading stations.

Spirit was also tasked with supplying some suitable barcode label printers. "We needed to be able to attach barcode labels to the fabric bags used to carry the samples," says Gary Jordan. "We wanted labels that would remain bonded to the bags within a harsh environment."

Spirit worked very closely with Zebra Technologies to identify the best type of industrial-grade printer for the project. This would need to be reliable and rugged, with a long life. They chose the Zebra S4M, a very durable but affordable mobile thermal printer.

The S4M offers a range of connectivity options, including standard serial, parallel and USB interfaces, as well as optional wireless networking. It has an eight foot media roll capacity, reducing the number of label changes needed. Spirit and Zebra also created customised labels for Liffe to use in its associated warehouses in Europe. "Spirit made sure that the label stock was suitable for our applications" comments Gary. "This included sourcing the right size of labels with the right glues."

He adds: "Throughout this project, we have set Spirit a range of problems and they have used their expertise to identify and source the most suitable solutions. We have then trialled their suggestions using loan devices that they have provided before making our decision. Spirit have not only acted as a supplier – they also have a great knowledge base, which has been invaluable to us.

"All of the devices are performing very well and have significantly increased our workflow rates. They have also improved the precision of the data, as they minimise any keying or data errors. They enable us to have much greater visibility of samples, as we can now track them throughout the process."

Gary concludes: "Spirit have been very helpful and proactive. Because they are a relatively small company, they provide a personal response, with a very quick turnaround in terms of replies to our queries. We feel that they are fighting our cause and understand our priorities – and represent these well to the manufacturers. We look forward to using their services in the future."