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Menzies Aviation

Fork lift mounted mobile technology streamline complex logistics operations



Menzies Aviation is the fastest growing, and now second largest, ground and cargo handling organisation in the world. It also owns Air Menzies International (AMI), the world's only global wholesale freight forwarder. The business is highly successful - operating at 136 airports in 32 countries, with annual revenue in excess of US\$1.13m and employing some 18,000 highly trained people. Customers include easyJet, Cathay Pacific, British Airways, Emirates, Qatar, Virgin America & Australia, Kingfisher, Jet Airways, Asiana and Singapore Airlines. Best in class safety and security, as well as great customer service, are core to its success and sets it apart from other handlers.

The company operates at more than 136 stations in 32 countries supported by a worldwide team of more than 18,000 employees, and serves over 500 airline customers, handling over 800,000 flights and 1.7 million tonnes of cargo per annum.

Along with their wholesale arm, AMI, the world's largest trade-only airfreight wholesaler, they are both fully owned subsidiary companies of John Menzies Plc. Air Menzies International, the world's largest airfreight wholesaler, works exclusively with freight forwarders and courier companies, offering highly competitive air freight rates and express rates. With over 5000 customers worldwide, the company is represented at over 220 of the world's airports.

Challenges

Complex logistics processes are in place within Menzies Aviation to manage the collection, labelling and storage of consignments and luggage into Menzies warehouses, with items scanned and tracked through their depots before being loaded for shipment around the world.

Menzies Aviation's estate of mobile computing hardware and data capture equipment, namely vehicle-mounted terminals fitted onto fork lift trucks and tethered long range barcode scanners, interface and share real time data with the Hermes air cargo management system. *Hermes* manages over 70 Air Cargo Terminals /Warehouses worldwide and supports air cargo volumes from 10,000 to over 1,400,000 tons annually.

Menzies Aviation approached Dakota Integrated Solutions with a view to source and implement replacements for their ageing estate of fork lifted mounted computers. Increasingly, operatives were experiencing issues with the units, including intermittent crashing of their thin client application, as well as power supply problems and high current drain from their fork lift truck batteries, all leading to unreliable performance and increased downtime.

Dakota were asked to specify new vehicle-mounted mobile computers to replace their existing estate of fork lift mounted computers.

Solution

A range of vehicle-mounted mobile computers from leading manufacturers were reviewed. These were specified against criteria including reliability, functionality, features, ruggedness and more. From a wide range of truck mounted mobile computing devices available on the market, Dakota decided to propose the VX8 by LXE. The VX8 is a rugged, Windows based vehicle-mount computer, wirelessly enabled with a 10.4" touch screen display, the LXE VX8 is designed for use in warehousing and logistics environments, with a magnesium enclosure engineered to handle extreme temperatures, shock, vibrations, dust and moisture. Optional integrated Bluetooth, WLAN and WWAN radio support deliver communications on the move.

The decision to propose this device was based on the belief that this mobile computer offered the best combination of size, durable build and reliability to fit the needs of Menzies Aviation. The VX8 runs on DC vehicle power, but also has an internal Li-Polymer backup battery, which means that when power to the unit is lost, the device does not power off but performs a controlled power down, should power not be restored in a timely manner.

As part of the solution, Dakota ran an evaluation process, working very closely with LXE pre-sales consultants. The testing phase also included evaluation of the Motorola LS3408ER rugged long range barcode laser scanner. The trial was conducted at Menzies Aviation's Heathrow warehouse facility. Following a very successful evaluation, an order was placed on Dakota for a number VX8 units to operate at their new Air Menzies International operation at Polar Park, Heathrow. A further order of thirty devices followed shortly afterwards, replacing Menzies Aviation's entire estate of legacy vehicle mounted computers. In addition to the provision of the vehicle mount computers, Dakota supplied new Motorola LS3408 long range scanners with retractable tethers, all covered with a full managed service contract with comprehensive 3-year support.

Benefits

Commenting on the roll out, VP of IT Communication & Operations for Menzies Aviation Stuart Brook said:

We are a mature user of warehouse mobile computing technology and have come to rely on the benefits such technology provide, however, when it came to evaluating new products, Dakota proved to be a very knowledgeable, yet easy-to-do-business-with business partner.

The technical expertise of their Systems Integration division is second to none, and we would have no hesitation to recommend their services.

He went on to say:

Our warehousing operatives experience less down time with more reliable equipment. Before installing the new truck mounted terminals, we, at times, had to rebuild up to 10 devices per week. Since our new devices have gone live, only 1 device so far has had to be rebuilt. We are really pleased to have the peace of mind to rely on a pro-active, supportive and approachable IT partner