POCKET PHONE MANUFACTURER DIALS UP SAVINGS

WESTERN WIRELESS, INC.

ISSAQUAH, WASHINGTON

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industry

MANUFACTURING — ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

applications

INVENTORY CONTROL · SHIPPING/RECEIVING · POINT OF SALE

situation

Western Wireless has more than 2,000 employees and is based in Issaquah, Washington. The company is a major cellular communications provider in the U.S., offering a range of products that include lightweight digital pocket telephones and mobile computers.

critical issue

Western Wireless was unable to maintain accurate inventory of its Personal Communications Services (PCS) phones and phone parts moving in and out of its warehouse. And customers were frequently delayed at the point of purchase due to poor print quality of bar coded labels, which did not scan on the first read.

reasons

Inventory tracking is critical to customer service at Western Wireless. Each phone's bar coded label must be scanned at the point-of-sale to validate its serial numbers and activate the customer's account. Glitches in inventory control could result in delays of customer validation, or, even worse, unauthorized usage of stolen phones. The bar code printers used by Western Wireless lacked high resolution and durability, which meant that phone activation was delayed until the label could be properly scanned.

vision & capabilities

Western Wireless needed better bar code label printers, with higher resolution and tougher labels, so the company could improve its inventory control system all the way from warehouse to point-of-sale. Western Wireless also wanted a vendor that would provide responsive technical support.

intermec solution

Intermec supplied Western Wireless with MODELS 4630, 4400, 3600, and 3400 Direct Thermal/Thermal Transfer Bar Code Printers to meet the company's varied needs and improve overall bar code label quality. The 4630 is a wide label printer (6.4" wide) with resolution of 300 DPI (dots per inch), for rugged, heavy-duty work. The 4400 is Intermec's fastest, with a top speed of 10 inches per second. The 3600 is another wide label printer with resolution of 200 DPI, and the 3400 is one of Intermec's most versatile models. Western Wireless selected its four printers to fit different bar code label applications.

benefits

Western Wireless now has greater control of its product inventory. The company estimates the Intermec equipment will pay for itself in 12 months due to labor savings in locating the phone parts in the warehouse, less labor dedicated to data entry and improved inventory accuracy. In general, the company is able to keep up with increasing product demand without adding more warehouse and clerical staff. Also, Western Wireless believes customer satisfaction has improved because it now has the capability to quickly and accurately activate customer accounts.

Intermec