NEW SCANNERS HELP WORKERS SEND PLANES BACK TO THE FRIENDLY SKY

UNITED AIRLINES

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

industry

TRANSPORTATION — COMMERCIAL AIRLINE

applications

LABOR TRACKING · TIME & ATTENDANCE

situation

In its leadership position as a major domestic and international commercial airline, United Airlines utilities automated data collection equipment throughout its operational network. For example, bar code equipment is used extensively at United's worldwide aviation maintenance facility located in San Francisco, California, with over 1,000 maintenance work stations at the site.

critical issue

Maintenance personnel at the San Francisco base were frustrated with their previous bar code wands and wedge readers. Federal Aviation Administration rules require airlines to log each completed maintenance task, so workers used bar code wands or wedge readers to capture data pertaining to specific work orders. However, workers often became aggravated with failed reads on the first pass. After repeated attempts, workers resorted to punching in the maintenance task data via keyboard. This not only slowed down the maintenance tracking process, it also introduced human error during data entry. In an attempt to alleviate the problem, United Airlines paid for special seminars that instructed maintenance personnel on proper techniques for using bar code wands. Despite these efforts, acceptance of the wands and wedge readers was relatively low, thereby reducing the efficiency of maintenance repairs and calibrations.

reasons

Exposed to extreme hot and cold temperatures, as well as dust and fine mists from lubricating oils, the maintenance hangar was a particularly harsh environment for the bar code equipment. Equipment which worked well under ideal conditions would perform sporadically in the industrial environment.

vision & capabilities

Management wanted equipment that would provide excellent first-read rates, and be rugged enough to withstand the hot, cold, mist and dust in the maintenance work area.

intermec solution

Intermec provided United Airlines with more than 50 state-of-the art MODEL 1463 CCD Scanners. These charge coupled scanners are designed to perform in applications that have poor quality, low contrast labels similar to those found in the maintenance area. MODEL 9710 Wedge Readers are also used to collect bar code data and send it to a PC workstation, while MODEL 9550 Industrial Transaction Managers interface with the hand held scanners to time stamp data collected on the maintenance shop floor.

benefits

The new MODEL 1463 CCD Scanners require a less refined scanning technique (compared to bar code wands) and gained instant end-user acceptance. As a result, data input time was drastically reduced and maintenance mechanics were able to spend more time performing actual repairs and calibrations. Management also believes the new scanners have improved the level of teamwork with the maintenance service group, largely because of the reduction in worker frustration.