efstechnology
OUTPUT & DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

EPICOR

AUTOFORM LaserNet helps C&D FOODS to meet Tesco's & Sainsbury's ASN-EPOD & SSCC roll out requirements

Overview

Challenge
To create, deliver and receive XML, EDI & barcode documents to meet a new retailing goods-in initiative.

To create customised SSCC barcode pallet labels & ASN notices on the fly.

To drive Commander 4j automated barcode pallet labeller.

IT Environment
Epicor TROPOS.

EDI & XML document exchange.

Solution
AUTOFORM LaserNet with XML and barcode capability.

Document changes achieved in-house without specialist programming knowledge.

Why AUTOFORM?
Recommended by Epicor.

Provided XML & EDI document formatting and data exchange in addition to traditional print formatting.

Provided XML interface between TROPOS & Commander 4J pallet labellers.

Document changes could be managed in-house without specialist programming knowledge.

Supporting the supermarkets' move to automated goods in processing

As the producer of over 20 million packs (p.a.) of supermarket own label pet food, C&D Foods were keen to meet the requirements of the new Standard Serial Shipping Code (SSCC) & Advanced Shipping Notice (ASN) initiatives, introduced by leading retailers in a bid to automate and accelerate their goods in process.

Traditional goods in procedures require that each party in the supply chain, manually key in the data from each others despatch notes to update their own computer systems. Naturally, this is a costly process and prone to error. Furthermore, it can cause severe delays across the whole chain.

The new system takes advantage of EDI / XML data transfer and barcode scanning, which allows data to flow seamlessly between the suppliers, carriers and retailers without any manual input. Traditional paper delivery notes are replaced with an EDI or XML ASNs, sent prior to delivery, so the retailer can allocate a delivery window, thus reducing 'off loading' time. Proof of delivery is sent as an XML or EDI (EPOD) message from the retailer to the supplier, confirming precisely what goods have been received, taking into account any rejected or missing goods. In addition, each pallet is tracked and traced by a unique SSCC, in the form of a barcode label. As each pallet's barcode is scanned, it is matched against the ASN on the receiver's computer system, instantly updating stock levels and confirming receipt of goods.

The new SSCC / ASN / EPOD system enables goods to be tracked more accurately as well as helping to streamline post delivery tasks such as payment, enquiries and insurance claims. It is not surprising that the process is being welcomed at every stage of the supply chain, as the improved efficiency reduces the cost base, accelerates payments and ultimately leads to increased sales and profitability.

Precise document formatting needed

From using EDI for many years, C&D Foods knew that the new system would require extensive document formatting to create the SSCCs & ASNs. To complete such a project in the past, C&D FOODs would have had to call in a specialist IT application programming consultant. However, as Mark Reilly, C & D Foods MIS Manager notes: "AUTOFORM LaserNet allowed us to do all the work ourselves, at a much lower cost. We have been using Epicor TROPOS since 2001 and it has proved to be extremely beneficial to our business. However, the native TROPOS output environment is a complex one, requiring a high degree of programming skill to assemble output into electronic documents. Furthermore, whilst the ASN / SSCC is a universal standard, each of the supermarket chains have their own, very precise, requirements for their pallet labels, in respect to font size, barcode position and information required. We estimated that the ASN / SSCC project would cost around one month of IT consultancy. However, what concerned us more than the cost, was the prospect of having to wait for a programmer to become available whenever a supermarket requested a label or document update. This would be unacceptable from a customer service perspective. Hearing our concerns, Epicor recommended AUTOFORM LaserNet, which has been be hugely successful. It has not only allowed us to create all the ASN & SSCC labels in-house, but other associated documents such as SITPRO Export CMR documents, which we can also print directly from TROPOS".

AUTOFORM LaserNet drives automated Commander4J pallet labellers

Mark continues: "Another major benefit is that AUTOFORM LaserNet converts TROPOS output into XML, thereby providing an interface through which C&D Foods can send and receive messages between TROPOS and the Commander4j automated labelling and palleting system. AUTOFORM LaserNet converts the TROPOS output into the SSCC label and triggers the Commander4j™ robot to apply them. Once the load is packed the Commander4j™ returns a "job complete" message back to TROPOS via AUTOFORM LaserNet, which initiates the dispatch of the ASN to the reciever. Furthermore, the new labels look more professional. Though the labels are designed for electronic capture, the goods-in staff still need to refer to them and AUTOFORM LaserNet ensures that they are easy to read. This reflects positively on us as a supplier".

He concludes: "As documents and systems move from paper to electronic formats, AUTOFORM LaserNet provides a very useful and easy to use suite of TROPOS output management tools. I would highly recommend it to other TROPOS users".

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