



Dutch Valley Foods Solves Picking Challenges and Overdelivers on Quality

Bulk foods distributor adopts Android mobile computers, providing its warehouse team with superior performance and reliability.

The roots of Dutch Valley Food Distributors were planted over 100 years ago when Elam Burkholder, a well-known farmer in East Earl, PA started several new business ventures, including a butcher shop and retail store on the family farm. Over the years, one generation passed along the business to the next, and the Burkholder family continues to grow the business.

Today, Dutch Valley employs more than 300 people at its corporate headquarters in Myerstown, PA, which includes a 200,000 square-foot warehouse and a full-service truck center. More than 5,000 products pass through the company's warehouse operations, including candy, chocolates, nuts, dried fruit, baking supplies, packaging supplies and specialty items, like gluten-free foods. These products are delivered to 29 states by Dutch Valley's fleet of local and long-distance trucks.

Dependable Order Picking

Dutch Valley has always prided itself on providing high-quality products and service. So, it was frustrating and costly when legacy handheld computers would drop connections with the warehouse's wireless network, causing disruptions in the order picking and fulfillment processes. Too frequently, the company had to retrieve mis-ships from stores, and in the case of perishable items, discard products resulting in losses. Dropped network connections and frozen devices were also highly frustrating to Dutch Valley's warehouse employees.

"With the old devices, from an aisle away, you could see the frustration on a worker's face when a device was not responding or connecting," says Ben Shirk, IT specialist at Dutch Valley Food Distributors. "We needed to deliver a better experience and restore the staff's confidence in their tools so they can work efficiently."

After installing a new wireless network and testing for total coverage, the company discovered the problem wasn't the network—it was the devices. The handhelds used the Windows Mobile operating system, which was at the end of life for support, so the company started exploring options.

SUMMARY



DUTCH VALLEY
FOOD DEVELOPMENT, INC.

Customer

Dutch Valley Food Distributors
Myerstown, Pennsylvania



Partner

CSSI Technologies
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

Industry

Warehousing and Distribution

Challenge

Increase warehouse efficiencies by boosting reliability of devices, improving connectivity, and delivering better user experiences

Zebra Solutions

- MC3300X Touch Computers

Results

- Deliver five-nines reliability for mobile device connectivity throughout the warehouse
- Drastically reduced mispicks, increasing order accuracy and reducing returns
- Customized interface makes new device adoption a "non-issue"
- Enabled IT staff to focus on higher-value projects

SUCCESS STORY

DUTCH VALLEY FOOD DISTRIBUTORS

As part of its search criteria, the company wanted to find a supplier who was local, responsive, and offered devices that used the Android operating system. Additionally, they wanted a rugged handheld computer capable of operating in extreme environments. At the time of the search, Dutch Valley also owned a canning facility where high humidity levels were a factor, so the handhelds needed to perform well in this climate as well as in refrigerated areas.

The Right Recipe for Success

After an extensive search, Dutch Valley found CSSI Technologies, Inc., a local IT consultant and reseller specializing in solutions for warehousing, manufacturing, and other demanding environments. After completing a business review with Dutch Valley, CSSI selected Zebra's MC3300X touch computers.

CSSI was eager to help the company and provided devices so Dutch Valley could test them in its varied warehouse environments. Dutch Valley was impressed with CSSI's responsiveness and the performance of Zebra devices.

"We know Zebra builds super-rugged equipment because we've had Zebra printers in our warehouse for years that have printed literally millions of labels, and they just keep running," says Shirk. "One of the side effects of warehousing is you have a lot of cardboard dust. Zebra devices aren't affected by dust. They just keep running and running."

Zebra's reputation for quality came through during head-to-head testing between the MC3300X device and handhelds from another vendor. CSSI's Device Lifecycle Management program also helped to configure new devices, rather than have Dutch Valley's busy IT team configure them and making mobile computers ready out of the box, and provides ongoing device management, maintenance, and updates. In addition to getting devices into production faster, the program also helps to maintain device standards and security.

"The other device we tried was fairly solid, but connectivity was often challenging," Shirk says. "With the Zebra device, the wireless network connectivity remained solid—even when going through a tunnel connecting two of our warehouses."

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Dutch Valley Food
Distributors



Keeping Chocolate Flowing with Rock-Solid Connectivity

Dutch Valley was impressed with its new solution and how it performed once deployed throughout all its warehouse operations — from their main facility, two smaller storage warehouses nearby, and their deli warehouse in Ohio.

“We are a preferred distributor for one of the largest chocolate suppliers in the world, so when there’s a holiday, we have to move fast in the warehouse to keep up with the orders,” Shirk says. “Our old devices simply couldn’t keep up with that pace. We can trace the Zebra mobile devices as they move from one Wi-Fi access point to the next. They are always ready with no lag or disconnects.”

Dutch Valley has another way of measuring the performance of Zebra devices—the absence of trouble tickets.

“I could show you about two thousand trouble tickets we had for our old devices dropping connectivity,” Shirk says. “Since deploying the Zebra devices, we haven’t had a single ticket.”

Ready for Anything

Workers can sometimes be reluctant to give up tools that they’ve come to know through daily use, so one challenge that Dutch Valley anticipated was achieving a smooth transition among its workers from the old devices to the new. The company credits CSSI for deploying MC3300X soft key capabilities to customize the interface for a familiar user experience, while introducing greater efficiency for warehouse workers.

“Training was easy for our workers based on the seamless transition made possible by CSSI,” Shirk says. “We can present everything needed via soft buttons on the screen and customizable keyboards. We flattened the learning curve to the point where we had almost no resistance to changing to a new device.”

While the interface looked the same for those using the devices, Zebra built powerful efficiencies into the system. “The new interfaces looked just like what they were used to using,” Shirk says. “And our workers now enjoy a night-and-day difference in performance and can find exactly what they need to do their jobs.”



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SUCCESS STORY

DUTCH VALLEY FOOD DISTRIBUTORS

Cutting Mispicks

The continuous connectivity that Dutch Valley's warehouse workers now enjoy with their new devices has virtually eliminated mispick issues that were a problem of the past.

"Mispicks typically weren't caused by human error," Shirk says.

"We determined they were caused by faulty devices. Those errors created costs from retrieving returns and damaged or perished goods. On top of that, we pride ourselves on providing exceptional customer service, so inaccurate orders just weren't acceptable."

With mispicks reduced, Dutch Valley can focus more on bigger challenges. "It has been a win for our warehouse team members because they no longer have to deal with dropped communication. And it's a win on the IT side as we're now freed up to work on projects elsewhere in the company because we're not stuck trying to triage an issue that we know is caused by faulty devices. Overall, it's a true win-win!"

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To learn more about how Zebra can help you streamline warehouse operations, visit www.zebra.com/warehouse



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