

TAKING STOCK

Field sales reps for leading grocery distributor receive upgraded scanning devices with advanced features that required minimal retraining



CASE STUDY

ABOUT THE COMPANY

River Valley Foods is a full-service grocery distributor providing a diverse line of specialty food products to retail stores throughout the Northeast. The family-owned company carries over 8,000 unique stock keeping units (SKU's) in the specialty, natural, ethnic, gluten free, snack and frozen categories. River Valley Foods has a team of 150 field sales representatives who regularly visit customer store locations to check inventory levels and provide hands-on service to help maximize retailer profitability. The company relies on the accuracy and dependability of its mobile data collection devices to ensure the highest levels of customer service.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

To support its field sales reps, River Valley Foods partnered with Peak Technologies in 2019 to supply Zebra mobile computers along with a new mobile inventory application leveraging the MCL mobility platform. The legacy inventory application was running on mobile computers on a 3G wireless network. However, Verizon announced it was discontinuing its 3G wireless communication service and moving to 4G. At the time, River Valley Foods was using Zebra MC67s along with proprietary software to connect to its backend systems. With 3G sunset, the company required full mobile computing refreshes while transitioning to 4G- and Android-enabled devices.

River Valley Foods also needed to update the software interface on every mobile computer without re-writing at the code level. This involved support coordinating the switchover, which needed to be seamless and not disrupt service to field reps. Additionally, since River Valley reps are spread across the Northeast, the company wanted a solution that required only minimal, remote-based training.



INDUSTRY:
Food & Grocery Distribution

APPLICATION:
Direct store delivery

BUSINESS CHALLENGE:
Field-based inventory analysis and data collection while ensuring a smooth transition to new 4G-enabled mobile computers

FEATURED SOLUTION:
Mobile device consulting, selection and procurement, software development, operating system and carrier network migration services, and help desk.

KEY BENEFITS:
Deploying an innovative solution that delivers the optimal customer experience to drive performance-based results

THE SOLUTION

Peak provided the consulting, expertise and recommendations for a rugged mobile device refresh of the Zebra TC57/TC77s. This included development of a new application that delivered the same functionality and features of the old system with nominal operational or visual changes.

Peak recommended an innovative approach to build a new application on the MCL4 mobility platform and mobile direct store delivery (DSD) solution to seamlessly migrate from River Valley Foods' existing homegrown solution to the new Android device platform. Application interfaces were streamlined and custom-built for ease-of-use in the field while connecting to the existing back-end system.

NEW CLOUD MOBILE COMPUTING DRIVES EFFICIENCIES

Previously, data sent from field representatives was "flat-file dependent," meaning records followed a linear, uniform format with no structure in place for indexing or recognizing relationships between records. Peak reverse engineered the previous platform and linked it to the company's existing database, which made it easier to integrate results. Updates are now deployed to the cloud via mobile connectivity and can be synced to any mobile device. Peak also delivered a soft rollout allowing reps to transmit data via the legacy devices in rural areas, while continuing to pull data from both new and old systems to the new platform.

ELIMINATING TRIPS TO THE HOME OFFICE

In the past, reps had to return to their home office before sending text files with database updates. The new platform allowed information gathered in the field to be uploaded directly in an MS-SQL database and for application changes to be published via the cloud to wherever the devices happened to be in the field. Additionally, since the MCL mobility platform supports publishing to devices from the cloud, it also eliminated the need to ship devices in for software upgrades and configuration.

MINIMAL TRAINING SAVES TIME AND MONEY

Training reps on a new user interface and application would have required hands-on training at River Valley Foods' main office. Many reps would have been pulled of the job for several days to make the trip to upstate New York. Since the replacement solution was extremely close to the existing system, training could be done remotely for selected areas of interest and did not require extensive end to end retraining.

BENEFITS AND RESULTS

Peak reimagined a solution that was familiar to the field sales reps, while vastly improving the user experience and maintaining River Valley Foods' back-end legacy system. Peak also operates a help desk for River Valley Foods if additional IT support is needed. This includes troubleshooting issues in the field to determine if a software or hardware issue requires resolution.

End-users can now deploy their own software updates via the cloud to add more features and functionality. The new streamlined interface makes tasks easier, faster and more efficient for field reps, while significantly upgrading their data collection capabilities.



These mobile devices are our bread and butter, so any downtime can be detrimental to our business," said Dan Amidon, hardware/systems manager, River Valley Foods. "Peak provided enhanced features while mirroring our older applications to make training and usage simple for our field reps. We've partnered with Peak for several years, and the relationship is still strong because of the level of expertise they have to find the right solution to meet our needs."

