

# CAPESPAN REAPS BENEFITS OF ANGLIA'S LINKFRESH MOBILITY SOLUTION

This month, Anglia Business Solutions takes us through the deployment of its award-winning LINKFresh mobile application at Sheerness-based importer Capespan UK Ltd

**CAPESPAN UK** Ltd, part of the Capespan Group, is a company with a £105 million turnover. The company delivers globally sourced fruit, salads and vegetables to top UK retailers, processors, wholesalers and caterers throughout the year.

The business is a leader in the global marketing of fruit, and a provider of supply chain service solutions. Its principal location is in the port of Sheerness, on a dedicated quay with cutting-edge coldstorage and pre-packing facilities.

## The business need

Capespan recognised the business benefits that could be gained from adopting an integrated IT strategy. It had already deployed solutions for business management and reporting. The skilled in-house IT team had also developed a quality control (QC) application, which was used to record all QC test data. However, this relied heavily on paper-based and manual data input procedures, which were both time-consuming and error prone. Capespan needed to extend access to these business-critical systems to remote workers, who were working in holds of ships or in vast coldstorage facilities. The company concluded that it needed real-time mobile data capture applications to help them to manage stock movements more effectively.

As Kevin Cracknell, UK MIS manager for Capespan, explained: "Due to the nature of our business, QC testing is performed on produce at every stage of its journey through our facility. We needed a method of rapidly recording and evaluating all of our test data so that we could provide live information on stock quality to key departments. Our current paper-based methods with manual data entry were inefficient.

"We evaluated a number of technologies as part of our selection process. This included the expansion of our existing back-office solution. However, it was clear that the Microsoft .NET Framework-based applications from Anglia had a significant technical advantage. The concepts were already proven and deployed with a number of similar fresh produce organisations, and its potential could be clearly seen," he added.

Modules from Anglia's award-winning LINKFresh mobile applications were deployed on

Windows Mobile-based ruggedised hand-held scanning devices. The selected LINKFresh modules included were mobile QC, quality check intake, stock take, pallet tracking, RAG testing and the positive release modules.

The LINKFresh solution was configured to reflect Capespan's existing proven QC operating practices. To verify the information recorded on the mobile devices, the workflow was seamlessly linked to a subset of Capespan's existing QC master SQL database.

The applications were originally developed as part of Anglia's Microsoft Dynamics NAV-based LINKFresh ERP solution for the fresh produce industry. However, the mobile technology proved flexible enough to operate with other business management solutions. By using Anglia's unique DataMaker tool set, the software development team rapidly created .NET data tables on mobile devices to synchronise with corresponding back-office tables.

## The user experience

To commence a QC test procedure, users can easily log themselves on using a unique barcode. This enables any user to pick up and use any hand-held device at any location.

Using Anglia's Drizzle Technology, the mobile device periodically synchronises with the back-end database as and when a data connection is available. The store and forward configuration enables the QC operation to continue, even when a data connection with the back-end database is lost, e.g. when working in coldstorage or holds of ships.

After every 10 synchronisations, the clock on the mobile devices is re-set to ensure that the time recorded for when each test is performed is accurate. On logging on, the user is presented with a main menu containing five module options; inspections, stock adjustment, dump, packhouse or damage.

• Inspections module – the pallet barcode is scanned. The user is then asked to confirm the data held on the back-office solution for that pallet. This includes checks on vessel name, PO number, product and variety, country of origin, pack size, quantity and grower.

The workflow application then directs the user to the main test criteria for that pallet. The user enters numeric values for various QC parameters such as number of bags, decay, bruising, cold damage or freezing damage. The sequence and number of tests, and the acceptable parameters for the test result, are all pre-configured dependent on the product or customer.

The user can also access a screen where they can capture (type) additional comments regarding the pallet i.e. "pallet is damaged". Typing in heavy gloves can be difficult. To assist, the application is pre-loaded with a number of frequently used "quick terms", which can be selected, e.g. incorrect, missing, label, pallet, etc. Optional reason codes can be added to the test summary, and photographs can be attached to the record for explanation if required. The test data is saved, and the inspection test is complete.

• Stock adjustment module – Stock adjustments are carried out remotely via the hand-held devices. Once the pallet barcode is scanned, the user enters values for the number of containers, the reason for the

adjustment and who requested it.

- Dumping module – dumping a product can also be recorded. The barcode on the pallet is scanned and the percentage dumped captured, together with the reason. A photograph can also be taken.
- Damage reporting module – After scanning the barcode to identify the consignment, the user can enter values to indicate: pallet damage, carton damage, quantity, colour code or damage code. Free-form comments and a photograph can also be attached.

## The benefits

The LINKFresh mobility solution provides Capespan with a vital tool in reducing stock movements and improving inventory management. Storage space at the "pick-face" is optimised, as only stock that has passed the QC procedure is released for picking. It has resulted in a significant reduction in the time taken and paperwork involved to complete the QC testing process. This has greatly improved productivity in the QA department.

From an administrative viewpoint, the system has already proven to have tremendous advantages over older paperwork systems.

Cracknell said: "The ability to provide a live data on product quality to staff in our sales, production and despatch departments has greatly assisted the decision-making process for stock allocation or re-allocation. We can instantly assess the quality levels available from our entire inventory to enable us to react to changing customer requirements.

"The flexibility of the technology deployed means that the solution can be rapidly re-configured, either by Anglia or Capespan. In that respect, we are now masters of our own destiny. The electronic collection and up-to-the-minute QC data now provides a wealth of management information, which assists in highlighting product or operational issues before they impact.

"The LINKFresh mobility solution from Anglia is a flexible solution that meets all of our initial project requirements. To date, it has exceeded our expectations. The solution provides a significant productivity advantage in a highly competitive marketplace. The system has already paid for itself." ○

