

Access to real-time data and enhanced accuracy of information and reporting are key benefits that rural and agricultural retail specialist Mole Valley Farmers (MVF) is already experiencing, thanks to a new wirelessly enabled automated data capture system from mobile data communications specialist Jade Communications.

Management at MVF, which includes nine South West based MVF branches and nineteen stores across the South and South-East of England under its "SCATS Countrystores" banner, identified that the company's ambitious growth plans would need investment in technology. In order to successfully implement a range of inventory management and in-store applications on MVF's existing ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system, the company needed a wireless infrastructure to provide fully mobile data acquisition and real-time functionality.

With such a large and growing operation, Mole Valley Farmers realised it was essential to have a reliable ERP system that accurately reports stock levels whenever and wherever the information is needed. With in-store sales reliant on having presentable and fully stocked shelves at all times, reporting accuracy is critical to engendering a more reliable supply chain and successful inventory management system. By upgrading to real-time operation MVF could ensure any product gaps on its shop floor were filled more quickly, helping to make its business even more agile and responsive to changes in customers' product preferences.

MVF began working with Jade as it wanted to further maximise the performance of its existing ERP system. The company's aim was to further reduce any time-lags between stock changes manually inputted into the ERP system and this same information becoming available to anyone else wanting to retrieve it from the system immediately afterwards. By reducing these delays, problems concerning inaccurate perceptions of stock levels which sometimes hindered future ordering processes could be significantly cut, as well as the duplication of staff effort when occasionally two individuals may have been looking for the same item simultaneously. MVF quickly realised that these improvements could enable substantial time and monetary cost savings for the company.



Mole Valley Farmers

Jade specified and installed ADC Krone Structured Cabling, Motorola WS2000 wireless switches and AP300 access points (internally and externally) for MVF's estate-wide wireless infrastructure and approximately 70 Motorola MC3090 handheld devices. Mole Valley Farmers is now benefiting from seamless real-time integration of stock control, inventory management and in-store applications within its ERP system. Armed with a handheld computer and with a simple scan of a product barcode, essential information such as a product line shortage on the shop floor can now be transmitted instantly from the handheld to the central ERP system and a message returned to the user communicating whether replacement stock is available or whether more items require ordering.



Commenting on the decision to work with Jade Communications, Paul O'Connor, Group IT Manager at Mole Valley Farmers says: "We were impressed by Jade's flexible approach and their ability to install a full end-to-end solution comprising of structured cabling, wireless infrastructure and mobile devices that would fully integrate with our existing in-house ERP system . This was essential for us."

"Jade were with us throughout every step of the project," Paul O'Connor continues. "From the initial wireless and cabling site surveys, testing and installation of points for structured cabling and configuration and examination of all handhelds and wireless equipment."

Besides tailoring the technology to the specific requirements of Mole Valley Farmers, Jade Communications was able to provide the company with the Jade Service Desk, a comprehensive, fast and responsive three-year support package for technical queries, a full three-year Motorola maintenance contract and Motorola Bronze service support for the MC3090 handhelds.

"Having access to information in real-time is already making a huge difference to our business. It has enhanced the accuracy of our data and enhanced our reporting structures," Paul O'Connor concludes. "We are delighted with the results and are particularly pleased with the handheld devices. With their seemingly limitless functionality, we are already looking at new ways of extending their application within other areas of the business."