SMOOTHLY DOES IT

Streamlining internal operations delivers customer value at Brokers Worldwide

With increased competition, rising costs and a growing volume of non-standard mail items at its three hubs in Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles, Brokers Worldwide, a domestic and international mail service business, was motivated to continually improve its mail-processing operations. Over the years the cost of processing automated letter and flat mail more easily for international and domestic mailings was greatly reduced through the investment in ID Mail Systems Dispatcher sorting systems. However a better method for non-automation compatible mail had remained elusive.

In 2010 Brokers identified this stream for improvement. The sorting routine for these items consisted of a multi-touch/step process that required several actions for each item, which added up to high labour costs and the potential for error as mail routeing complexity increased.

Based on its success in automating Brokers' machinable items, ID Mail was consulted for ideas on how best to enhance non-machinable mail and parcel processing. Jerry Fenerty, president of ID Mail Systems, explains: "Our initial contact with Brokers suggested that the Manual Mail Workstation (MMW) was a good place to start, but Brokers challenged us to make this system more productive and easier for operators to use with limited support requirements. This included eliminating almost all key entry for operators and not relying on OCR, which would add to the expense and complexity of the solution with limited benefit due to the nature of the mail items.

"To meet that need, ID Mail engineers designed a new touchscreen driven GUI that used intuitive functions with minimal operator action and a new ergonomically designed workstation that would not only reduce fatigue but also lead to increased productivity, thereby lowering costs and improving service."

The new MMW system is a semi-automated solution linked to a central SQL database. It includes an input conveyor for loading batches of items that automatically transfers them to the operator as pieces are processed. The MMW includes a Windows computer, industrial indicia label printer, postal certified weighing scale, barcode scanner and 17in touchscreen monitor, software and workstation.

To process the mail items, the operator first selects a customer job that links to the service and processing requirements for that customer's mailstream on a server. Using the barcode scanner, a job traveller can be scanned and optionally each mailpiece can be individually scanned for track-and-trace applications. Mailpieces are placed on the recessed scale so that the weight is automatically captured. The top 44 country destinations are displayed on the touchscreen as icons along with mail formats. An operator only has to touch the button representing the country and the format, and the item is matched to the computerised routing matrix and assigned the appropriate sort code and postage paid indicia on a self-adhesive label.

For mail that is already in country order, and has the same weight and format, multiple items are placed on the scale and the system automatically counts the items and produces the appropriate number of indicia labels. The scale's 32kg capacity handles the full range of Brokers' mail and parcels.

The system design allows previous piece information to remain selected, so if the next item is for the same destination or format, the operator is free to accept the mail item with one-touch, making for extremely fast processing. Additional customer- and job-selectable information such as mailpiece ID, bag ID and tracking barcodes, can be added to the printed label as well, making processing more efficient. If a CN22 customs label is required, a second label is printed and all data matched for proper customs documentation. At the conclusion of processing, captured data is transmitted to Brokers' IT system for postal manifest reporting, invoicing and the creation of customer and internal operation reports that enable each item to be tracked by customer, batch, item ID, bag, destination and format. The MMW also enables productivity to be tracked at the station and operator level.

Gene Donohoe, vice president of operations at Brokers, is delighted with the new system: "Based on processing data we've captured, there has been a substantial increase in productivity since implementing the ID Mail MMW systems."

FIND OUT MORE

ID Mail Systems
Tel: +1 860 344 3333
Email: sales@idmailsystems.com
Web: www.idmailsystems.com

QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBER | 100