

UniQue ID Help Keep the Airport Baggage Moving for SITA

Industry: Logistics

Application: Baggage management and tracking

Product Solutions (Hardware and Software):

Hand Held Products Dolphin® 7300RF, 9500, and 9550

Partner: UniQue ID (Maintenance and Servicing)



Several UK airports are benefiting from a new baggage management and tracking system. The system was developed by SITA Airport Services, and is based around three models of Dolphin® mobile computers. These were supplied by Hand Held Products, the world's leading provider of image-based data collection solutions. The maintenance and servicing of these units is being undertaken by automated data capture and mobile computing specialist, UniQue ID, a Premier Solution Partner for Hand Held Products.

Company Profile

Airport Services is a division of SITA, the world's leading supplier of applications, communications and IT infrastructure for the air transport sector. The division focuses on the complete integration of technology systems at airports. These include state-of-the-art solutions for passenger and baggage processing; departure and arrival control; terminal management; and multi-media display systems.

The Business Challenge

A couple of years ago, the airlines at several UK airports issued competitive tenders for a new baggage management and tracking system to replace the outdated reconciliation system. SITA Airport Services developed a solution that covered all airline requirements, including maintenance and ongoing support. It incorporated Dolphin® mobile computers from Hand Held Products as the key offering to meet the airlines' needs for effective mobile handheld terminals.

SITA Airport Services' Solution Design Manager, Phil Crowder-Johnson, says: *"One of the drivers for the new system was the replacement of the wireless terminals. The airports wanted a new type of unit that would be much more robust in an industrial environment than the previous one. Other important criteria included ergonomics and operability."* SITA was chosen to install the new system at four airports –starting at Birmingham in September 2004, followed by Aberdeen and Edinburgh and, most recently, London Gatwick in April 2005.

The Solution

For Birmingham, Aberdeen and Edinburgh airports, the Dolphin® 7300RF was chosen. This is a compact unit that offers an excellent performance combined with low power consumption. It is light but strong and rugged, and can withstand harsh environments, and is therefore suitable for a wide range of applications.

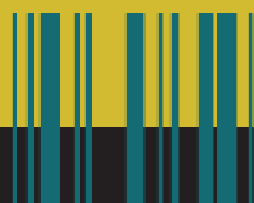
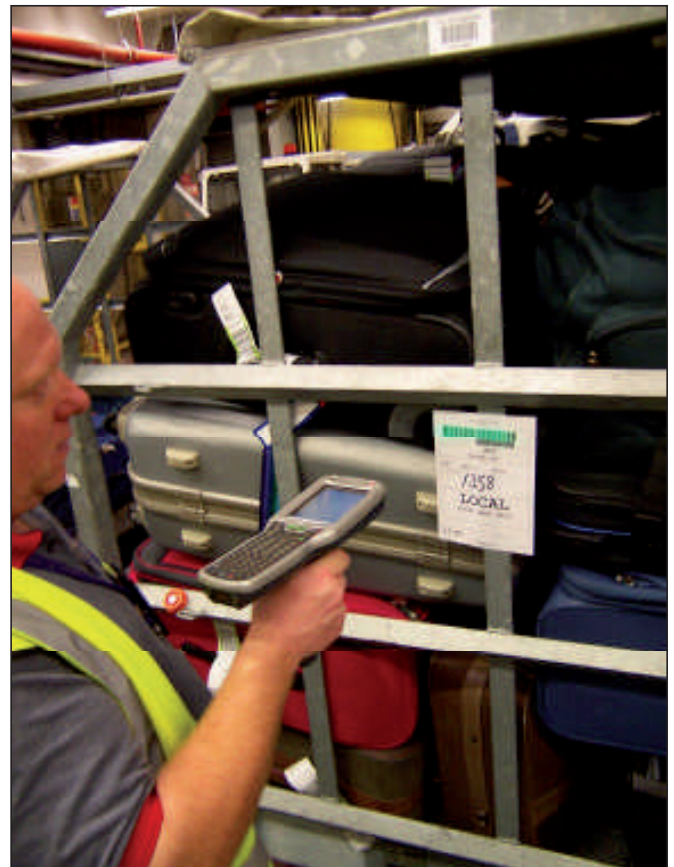
Phil Crowder-Johnson comments: *"In the past, we've used a number of different suppliers for handheld terminals. When we assessed each product's suitability for this type of industry –including factors such as performance, total cost of ownership, and service levels – Hand Held Products' Dolphin® mobile computers and UniQue ID's maintenance and servicing support came out on top. The 7300 was ideal for Birmingham, Aberdeen and Edinburgh airports."*

At Gatwick, the users insisted upon a review of the different terminals available by an independent consultant. Phil says: *"These devices may be in use for up to seven years, so it's only right that the users are involved in the decision. The users unanimously agreed upon the Dolphin® 9500 as the terminal of choice. Its sister product, the 9550, was chosen for internal work in the baggage halls. The 9500 is used in other areas, including aircraft parking stands, as it is easy to store and easy to use."*

The 9500 and 9550 are both high performance mobile computers powered by Hand Held Products' Adaptus™ image scanning technology. They incorporate a digital camera and an industry-leading triple-radio with integrated wireless WAN, LAN and PAN. The Dolphins

have a lightweight, ergonomic and rugged design and boast the best specification in their class for performance, versatility, and durability. The key difference in the 9550 is that it includes an integrated pistol grip.

Phil continues: *"One of the main drivers behind this new system is security. In the UK ten years ago, the Department of Transport brought in a mandate requiring the automated reconciliation of baggage: matching baggage to passengers boarding the aircraft. Each bag goes to a sortation area where the bar coded tag on each bag is scanned before being loaded to containers or aircraft hold."*





The Benefits

"With the new system, there are three main components - management, reconciliation and tracking each of which is integrated with the airport's flight information system, the airlines check-in system and SITA's worldwide baggage tracing system. The Dolphin shows if the baggage is being loaded onto the correct container and ensures that it gets on the right flight at the right time. Sometimes the Dolphin can even be used to segregate baggage according to the passenger cabin class, providing a priority service for premium passengers. If baggage is due to go on a connecting flight, the Dolphins can be used to group bags and put them into transfer containers, increasing the efficiency of the ground handling operation".

"If a passenger doesn't turn up at the boarding gate, the ground handlers have to identify which bags the passenger had and then quickly offload them so that the plane can depart. With our automated system, they can enter the passenger's name and instantly see how many bags they had, where they were loaded, and at what time. It even gives the handlers a good idea of their approximate position within the container."

Phil adds: "There may be 400 or 500 bags on a flight, so if the ground handler can identify the location of specific items very quickly, this is going to reduce the number of departure delays. The Dolphins make a real difference to the speed and efficiency of the process."

If a stray bag is found somewhere (for instance, it may have fallen off a baggage cart onto the tarmac), the Dolphins are used to scan it. This will tell the user who it belongs to, which flight they are supposed to be on, where the flight is and its departure time.

SITA's solution can also link with the global baggage tracing system, which traces the history of each bag. *"The new system is working very well so far," says Phil. "The ground handlers are very happy with the new Dolphins, and report that they are a lot better than the previous units. They are used inside and outside, in all types of weather."* He adds: *"We are very happy with the service we have received from Hand Held Products throughout this project. For the UK sites, we decided to use UniQue ID for the maintenance and servicing of the units. They are able to offer a high level of support, which is a crucial requirement for us in this fast-paced working environment. The service which we have received from them so far is second to none. We expect to use devices from Hand Held Products more and more in the future. We're already working on a number of contracts for other sites where we hope to roll out a similar system, using more Dolphins."*

