Mitigating the spread of Covid-19 by managing mobile devices in the supply chain

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Enterprise mobile technology, such as barcode scanners, mobile computers, headsets, vehicle mount computers and other devices, is used extensively in the supply chain to track the movement of goods from the plant, warehouse or distribution centre to the end-user.

This mobile technology is shared and used frequently every day by different workers during various shifts in the supply chain. With the advent of Covid-19, these devices pose a risk of spreading infection. The need for a system to manage and track these devices has become more imperative, as well as the cleaning of these devices between shifts.

The adoption of Bidvest Mobility's Asset Control software solution has increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, allowing the efficient management of mobile devices in the supply chain by tracking devices as they are issued to a specific user, creating a chain of custody that allows managers to track and trace devices in real-time.

Simon Grisdale, Managing Executive at Bidvest Mobility commented: "Due to the demand from our large retail customers, we have added a cleaning module to this software solution, which ensures the traceability of the cleaning of devices as they are used by different operators and shifts.

"As an added value service to our customers, we have partnered with one of our sister companies in the Bidvest Group, who are using our system to manage a physical cleaning service at one of the leading retail groups that use Honeywell mobile technology, which includes Vocollect voice-directed devices (comprising head-sets) and Honeywell barcode scanners for managing inventory in their warehouse.

According to Grisdale, the headsets used for voice-directed work are intimate devices that sit close to the mouth and need to be thoroughly sanitized before being handed over to the next operator. The same applies to handheld barcode scanners and mobile computers. "We have three dedicated Hygiene Specialists per shift at the retail operation's facility, one of whom

is a "Super Hygiene Specialist", responsible for both the cleaning activities as well as managing the team and onsite operation," he added.

"With this retail customer, Bidvest Mobility is responsible for all chemicals, materials, and resources required to perform the onsite cleaning function as per the registered asset list. Each Hygiene Specialist is equipped with a mobile device running Bidvest Mobility's Asset Control Solution, with training provided on its usage. Before launching the software system, we provided all the barcode labels for the assets to be scanned and registered on the system," explained Grisdale.

The Access Control Solution has different levels of security and requires an operator to login with individual details, such as username and password, when equipment is issued and returned, which provides a trail of accountability of the mobile asset, as well as the cleaning status.

Grisdale said that this cloud-based software solution can accommodate different regions, as well as sites within regions and locations within different sites. "This provides management with a quick real-time overview of key metrics on operational, asset, and system health. If for example, there is a case of Covid-19 or shortage of devices in the warehouse, detailed reporting is available should furthCovider investigation be required, and reparations made immediately."

Controlling assets (booking assets in and out) is the main feature of the solution. Exchanging one asset out for another is also possible and allows an operator to exchange an asset already issued out to an employee with another asset. Assets may be exchanged if they malfunctioned, need to be charged if battery-operated, or for any reason deemed necessary for the exchange," he added.

Assets that have malfunctioned and that are maintained by Bidvest Mobility may be booked for repairs as well when exchanged. When an asset is booked out for repairs, the system can send out automatic notifications (emails) to predefined parties.

Grisdale said that mobile technology used in the supply chain is expensive, so it's important that a company's mobile assets are well managed, and that management has a real-time overview of the status of these devices, which play a key role in keeping the supply chain fully operational. "With the advent of Covid-19," he concluded, "our development team worked quickly to add a module that allows these mobile devices to be used safely in the supply chain."

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