

Case study

Longaberger

Handcrafted
Automation



At a glance

Industry: Manufacturing

Application: Product Labeling

EasyCoder® 501XP smart printers simplify labeling for Longaberger

Imagine going to work in a basket that's seven stories tall. That's what workers at The Longaberger Company's Ohio headquarters do everyday. The building is an exact replica of their Medium Market Basket—only 160 times larger. The design draws only a little more discussion than the loyalty basket collectors worldwide feel to the company itself.

Longaberger has built its reputation on individually handcrafted baskets since it was founded in 1973. Today it's a nearly \$1 billion organization employing nearly 7,300 craftspeople and professional support staff with over 71,000 independent sales associates nationwide. Recently, they've diversified into several product lines.

Last year they began making furniture items, butcher-block tables and hardwood maple curios for basket collections.

Ironically, Longaberger's commitment to customer care created an unexpected bottleneck within their packaging area.

At the end of the production process, product is packaged at their shrink-wrap operation and then shipped to their distribution center. Employees used to insert both a care card, which was placed on the inside of the protective packaging, and affix a label with the item number and bar code to the outside.

Inserting the care cards created a significant bottleneck in the process. The cards had to be placed inside the packaging by hand, which was labor intensive. "Having someone stand and put the cards in the packaging was costly," said Darin Stanson, Longaberger operations manager. "We really needed a label that was large enough to incorporate the

care instructions along with the other data.” They also needed a printer that could do more than simply print labels.

Enter Intermec.

Longaberger installed Intermec EasyCoder® 501XP printers with Intermec Duratherm® Labels. Not only can the printers produce a high-quality label with care and item tracking information on it—eliminating the costly step of inserting the separate, pre-printed care cards—but because they can operate as stand-alone smart printers, the 501XPs can be programmed with all the product and care information and run without a PC to control it. This not only saves space on the manufacturing floor, but also saves money by not requiring a dedicated computer for every printer. Longaberger uses Fingerprint, Intermec’s highly adaptable software programming language, to design custom labels and

streamline the manufacturing process. Fingerprint allows them to create a single label for each product that consolidates the stock-keeping unit identifier, product name with description, and care instructions.

Once the data is loaded into the printer, an operator simply keys in an item number using the 501XP’s keypad, so as product moves along one of three conveyors, the pieces are shrink-wrapped, the printers create the custom labels on the fly and labels are applied by the operator.

“We use different models of Intermec printers throughout our manufacturing facilities for labeling,” Stanson said. “We chose the 501XPs for our WoodCrafts facility because they can operate as a standalone without a PC.” The smart printers are also used to help manage the production run. The 501XPs

LCD display can show a variety of information, like part number, helping the operator know where they are in the run. The printers also have a label-taken sensor so they will wait for a label to be taken before printing the next, saving on potential waste from labels that are damaged waiting to be applied.

“Now one label carries all of the information we need and they look great,” Stanson said. “The crew we needed before to hand insert the care cards has been moved to other critical areas in the operation that needed more resources.”

“We’re very happy with the 501s. We print approximately 50,000 to 60,000 labels a week and having the ability to include all the information on one label delivers substantial savings.”

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