

Case study



Transputec delivers for Swissport Cargo Services

“Transputec has implemented a technology solution that will reduce costs, enable fast and accurate archiving, provide instant document retrieval and create value added customer service.”

Tony Lodder, IT Systems Manager, Swissport Cargo Services



Solution overview

Customer Profile

Swissport Cargo Services provides air freight logistics to more than 100 airlines around the world. The company delivers a seamless range of services to customers in over 55 airports.

Business Challenge

The company wished to replace its Air Waybill photocopying and microfiche archiving operation with a document imaging and retrieval system. The aim was to reduce paper handling, improve document image quality and enable instant retrieval at 100% accuracy.

Solution

Transputec delivered a bespoke scanning retrieval system in partnership with Cardiff Software Ltd, suppliers of the document imaging system.

Benefits

Elimination of AWB photocopying and microficheing.

- Reduced costs
- Creation of electronic archive
- Instant retrieval of documents
- Reduced storage and paper handling overheads
- Value added customer service

Software & Services

Bespoke document scanning retrieval comprising an SQL database and search engine.



Customer profile

Swissport Cargo Services provides single-source air freight logistics to more than 100 airlines around the world, including major carriers such as KLM and Singapore Airlines. In 2002 it handled 2.5 metric tons in over 55 airports and generated an income of \$138million. The company delivers a seamless range of services to its customers including full export and import documentation handling, preparation of manifests, issuance of delivery orders, customs clearing and comprehensive security checks.

Every consignment of air freight is accompanied by an Air Waybill (AWB) – an instrument of air transport which serves as a receipt for the shipper. AWBs provide detailed information as well as associated documents. As part of the paper handling and document archive procedure, the AWBs used to be photocopied and then microfiched by Swissport Cargo Services, a time consuming and expensive operation.



Business challenge

“We were taking more than 2.5 million photocopies a year with microfiching costs exceeding £35,000. That represents a huge volume of paper and a cumbersome and expensive way to store it,” said Tony Lodder, IT Systems Manager at Swissport Cargo Services. **“Sending the documents to microfiche could take up to six weeks, quite a time lag before archived documents could be accessed.”**

Copy quality could be very poor and document retention compliance was also an issue – HM Customs stipulate that some air-freight records must be stored for as long as seven years. Both agents and airlines regularly need to access AWB documents for various purposes such as to establish proof of delivery, deal with claims, check freight charges or resolve other payment queries.

A priority was to reduce the sheer volume of paper, create an instant retrieval facility and improve document image quality. Document storage was a growing problem as filing cabinets took up valuable office space and filing itself was a particularly onerous task.

“Essentially we wanted to move towards a new era of document handling”, said Tony. **“The air-freight industry is complex and heavily dependent on outdated legacy systems. A document imaging initiative would be the first step away from such a heavy dependence on paper, bring archiving procedures up to date and reduce operating costs.”**

“We needed a solution that could deliver optimum retrieval performance – the ability to access a unique document without any margin for error. We are very pleased with the result.”

Tony Lodder
IT Systems Manager
Swissport Cargo Services

The company was put in touch with Transputec Business Solutions who scoped the company’s existing procedures, assessed the critical business challenges and proposed a project plan. The aim was to replace photocopying and microfiching with an intelligent scanning and retrieval solution based on recognition of unique AWB numbers.

Solution

Working in partnership with Cardiff Software Ltd, leading global provider of document capture software, Transputec delivered a bespoke scanning retrieval solution. This comprised an SQL database and the programming expertise to create a search engine to read each unique AWB number with 100% accuracy.

The crux of the challenge was the development of a generic template for complex documents. “Air Waybills are generally of poor quality and the layout of data can vary significantly. That’s not helped by archaic dot matrix printouts which can often cause misaligned data on the document,” said Tony. **“We needed a solution that could deliver optimum retrieval performance – the ability to access a unique document without any margin for error. We are very pleased with the result.”**

“As documentation is such a critical element in the air-freight industry the Transputec solution has helped us create value all along the business chain.”



Benefits

The AWB scanning and retrieval system is enabling Swissport Cargo Services to radically reduce its photocopying and microfiche costs. **“We can see some impressive savings in terms of machine maintenance and leasing, particularly as we were using such heavy duty machines.”** The company previously dealt with many thousands of pieces of paper on a daily basis but now has a database of scanned documents which can be easily handled, managed and archived.

According to Tony, the retrieval benefits are particularly welcome. **“There is tremendous potential in offering a value added service for our customers – it’s something we can actively promote.”** Instead of waiting six weeks for a document to be archived, retrieval is instant and anyone can access the database of scanned AWBs from a PC desktop. As documents are online as soon as they are scanned they can be quickly and efficiently emailed to customers, together with all associated documents, in a single pdf. **“By reducing a lengthy and cumbersome procedure to a series of key strokes we can enhance customer service and bring competitive advantage.”**

This ability to respond quickly and electronically to a customer’s query represents a welcome leap forward in an industry beset with legacy systems and complex document handling procedures. **“As documentation is such a critical element of the air-freight industry the Transputec solution has helped us create value right along the business chain.”**

The new system also eliminates the frustrating delays associated with selecting the correct microfiche reel, locating a microfiche reader and scanning for the correct record, a process that could sometimes take hours. The use of email to deliver AWBs also means that documentation can be simultaneously sent to multiple locations, along with an audit trail.

Tony concluded: **“Managing a high volume of paper is fast becoming an unacceptable overhead in the electronic age. Transputec has implemented a technology solution that will reduce costs, enable fast and accurate archiving, provide instant document retrieval and create value added customer service.”**



For more information

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