

RETAIL DISTRIBUTION CASE STUDY

Printronix Thermal Printers Solve Retail Bar Code Compliance for Alba-Waldensian

Alba-Waldensian Inc., headquartered in Valdese, North Carolina, uses the most modern, state-of-the-art computerized knitting technology to produce a wide variety of stretch undergarments. The highly innovative spirit that has been the company's trademark for close to a century continues to be its "secret weapon" today. It is this spirit that enables the company to further develop and market its highly unique products while maintaining its competitiveness throughout the world.

As one example of its innovation, Alba-Waldensian was the first to adopt stringent bar code standards to increase its efficiency and heighten its compliance with retailers. A defective bar code reduces that efficiency and can result in non-compliance fines, lagging production lines and delayed shipments. Alba-Waldensian ships its products to a number of retailers each year, and supply chain bar code failure was resulting in non-compliance fines totaling more than \$12,000 per year from Sears, Roebuck & Company and other companies.

BUSINESS PROBLEM

Alba-Waldensian's immediate need was to eliminate non-compliance fines imposed by its retail customers, including Sears, Roebuck & Co., by improving its bar code quality on shipments to the retailers. Alba-Waldensian needed to label all goods with a linear Code 128 bar code to meet the requirements of its customers. To solve this problem, Alba-Waldensian engaged the company's Corporate Information Systems, EDI Compliance Group to find a resolution.

Alba-Waldensian had been using Zebra's 170xi systems to bar code its inventory prior to shipment to the customer. However, on recommendation by Sears, the EDI Compliance Group contacted the Printronix Professional Services Groups to identify the most efficient, yet cost-effective, solution for printing high-quality, linear Code 128-compliant bar coding systems. Next, the group integrated a Printronix linear Code 128-compliant printer into the company's ID BPCS enterprise software using standard roll stock to print the label data on.

By integrating the new bar code solution into Alba-Waldensian's operations, the EDI Compliance Group found that the Zebra printers generated labels too slowly and required memory upgrades to handle the more complex label requirements presented by the company's retail customers. Additionally, the label quality that was received at the customer site was often unreadable, either due to poor print quality or smudging that occurred during shipping. The EDI Compliance Group determined that the most economical solution for this problem was to install higher performance hardware.

PRINTRONIX SOLUTION

The Printronix Professional Services Group recommended the Printronix T5308 web-enabled, industrial grade thermal printers using direct thermal and thermal transfer printing to improve efficiency and solve Alba-Waldensian's label scanning problems. While Alba-Waldensian experimented with various thermal bar code printing solutions, and examined other vendor's products, the company found the Printronix printers to be a proven entity with its major customers. Additionally, the price/performance ratio made Printronix's thermal printers an attractive choice.

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With a clear understanding of the company's business needs, the Professional Services consultants employed Printronix's online data validation (ODV) to ensure a linear Code 128-compliant bar coding system that integrated easily into SAP to help meet even the strictest bar code compliance specifications. Using the Printronix 5038 with ODV, Alba-Waldensian was able to ensure bar code readability and scanability; automatically strike out any defective bar codes; print new, accurate replacements; and allow for unattended printing with the back-up and void features inherent in ODV. The Printronix solution had Alba-Waldensian up and running in one day with no shipping down time.

Alba-Waldensian was thrilled with Printronix Professional Services' fast turn-around time and excellent customer service. Additionally, Printronix's solution offered a wide range of features designed to make batch or on-demand label printing convenient and efficient in any type of environment. Printronix's PrintNet® Enterprise enables remote printer management through an integrated Ethernet adapter and Java-based remote management software. With the Printronix Dual Wireless /Ethernet option, print management becomes even simpler by allowing full and complete flexibility of location and application, while eliminating the time consuming and expensive reconfiguration of hard-cabled systems when manufacturing floor change-overs occur. In addition, the system provides the centralized control, consistency and diagnostics previously available only in hard-cabled PrintNet Enterprise-management systems.

The bottom line result of the implementation: With the purchase of eight T5038 printers with ODV, Alba-Waldensian was able to realize an estimated savings of \$12,900 per year due to the elimination of non-compliance fines.

In addition to the cost savings, batch and on-demand label printing solved the bar code compliance issues by enabling Alba-Waldensian to print a perfect batch of bar-codes without having to start over or manually correct the system. With Printronix as its partner, Alba-Waldensian has acquired seven additional Printronix thermal printers since its initial purchase.

CLIENT REACTION

"Retail requirements are a key aspect of doing business and when Sears recommended a solution that we knew would work for us, we contacted Printronix to solve our bar code scanning problems. Now that the solution is in place, we can rest assured that we will not receive any more non-compliance fines."

William T. Neill
Director, Information Systems, Alba-Waldensian

"Alba Waldensian has been a strong and valued trading partner of ours for many years. We are so pleased that we can work together to improve their vendor bar code compliance and shipments within our supply chain."

Sue Headke
Vendor Support Manager, Sears, Roebuck & Co.