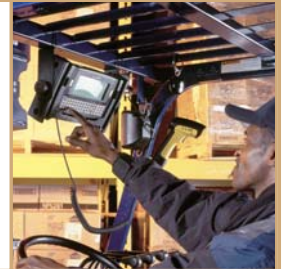


# Yakka Keeps Aussie Workforce Clothed with the Help of LXE's Wireless Data Collection Solutions

## CASE STUDY

**YAKKA PTY LTD** is Australia's largest supplier of industrial work wear and corporate clothing. The company has established a reputation over the past 70 years of bringing together the best in people, design, manufacture and sourcing to supply the total clothing requirements of its diverse customer base. Enterprises supplied range from the largest corporate clients to individual trades people seeking the best in work clothing. Yakka has grown to become Australia's premier work wear supplier and the name, Yakka, has become synonymous with endurance, strength and pure Aussie sweat.



*Yakka, ten years ago, carried 40,000 SKUs with growing numbers. Yakka's management determined they needed a new technology to continue fulfilling and distributing orders accurately and efficiently.*

Yakka's management visited the United States and reviewed the supply chain operations of apparel businesses, focusing on their use of automation and information technology to drive efficiencies. These technologies included automated carousels, pick-to-light systems, sortation conveyors and mobile terminals incorporating radio frequency (RF) data communications. The study concluded they needed a system based on RF data communications, with other technologies integrated into the system at different points in the warehousing operation.

### Scale and Complexity

Today, Yakka carries 70,000+ SKUs, almost twice as many as when the need for RF data communications was first conceived. This rapid growth in product lines has been matched by a change in the complexity of order fulfillment. Ten years ago, most of Yakka's corporate orders were dispatched in bulk to the customers' own distribution facility. Today Yakka ships orders directly to individual customer employees. For one customer, this means instead of shipping 1,000 orders yearly, 70,000 orders are shipped yearly.

By implementing technology and constantly refining its use, Yakka has managed to meet the challenges of a growing business, an increased quantity of SKU's, and a dramatic increase in the number of shipments, with essentially the same physical infrastructure and human resources.

"Ten years ago, our picking operation was entirely manual. There was no location management. To find a

product, you had to remember where it was stored, and if you needed the item replenished you had to remember where the bulk quantity was stored," recalls David Marshall, General Manager, Information Systems. "By implementing a RF system with terminals and bar code scanning we put a whole level of accuracy into the system that otherwise could not have been achieved."

### Yakka Order Fulfillment

In Yakka's 10,000 square meter Broadmeadows warehouse, product is received in pallets of mixed SKU cartons. Each pallet is received by scanning a unique bar code identifying it and its contents. Then, each carton is "scanned" into a random racked carton location. At this point, Yakka's system knows the location of each carton in the warehouse.

Customer orders are matched against available product, and are then released to be picked. The physical volume of each product line is calculated and the appropriate quantities of bar coded carton labels are produced. Full cartons and "split" cartons are picked in parallel and then consolidated using bar code scanning and conveyors prior to being sorted into carrier ready loads. In a typical 7 am-12 am two-shift working day, over 800 orders comprising 16,000 order lines are fulfilled.

Yakka uses a combination of standard picking trolleys, "man-up" truck order pickers and "smart" picking trolleys incorporating a pick-to-light system allowing up to eight cartons to be picked simultaneously. Each piece of equipment carries an LXE MX3 handheld computer mounted in a bracket or an LXE VX1 vehicle-mounted computer, with a bar code scanner attached. The LXE mobile computer's large bright display shows picking instructions for the operator, each pick by scan-

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ning the appropriate product bar code. "The RF data communication system means we can validate each pick a person makes as they are doing it," comments David Marshall.

The picked carrier ready loads are bar code scanned a final time prior to being loaded onto the carriers' vehicles as a final confirmation that they have been dispatched.

## Results

The introduction of RF data communications and bar code scanning to Yakka's operations has delivered significant benefits. Stock and order picking accuracy is now so high that Yakka's auditors no longer demand disruptive, time consuming stock takes. This improved accuracy has also delivered improved customer satisfaction in terms of meeting promised customer delivery times and improved productivity due to elimination of fruitless stock item searches. The real-time nature of RF technology also provides a way to obtain meaningful productivity statistics for each individual operator.

Throughout Yakka's ten-year use of RF technology, LXE has been providing equipment, support service and expertise to continually refine the operation. In 2002, LXE undertook a project to upgrade the system from the original hardware supplied in 1993.

"LXE has been a key supplier to Yakka for a number of years, and so they were the natural choice to take on this upgrade project. The brief was a challenging one, but LXE has delivered once again," comments Dave Marshall.

## Continual Improvement

The integration of the trolley mounted pick-to-light system and facility to print customer address labels at the point of picking full cartons (and thereby avoiding the possibility of matching the wrong label to a carton) are two of the recent developments to Yakka's system. On the drawing board today are plans to link the system to carrier systems, with a facility for the RF technology to drive a pre-sort of cartons. The next challenge will be to use RF technology to assist with the processing of customer returns.

"LXE has been reliable and responsive with the expertise that has been invaluable in the development of our systems to meet our challenges. The equipment is extremely reliable and when we've needed support, it's always provided promptly," concludes Dave Marshall.

The challenge to Yakka's order fulfillment system remains the same; finding the most efficient way of fulfilling both high volume orders from a small number of customers and low volume orders from a large volume of customers, all from one facility. With over 70,000 SKUs, 15,000 "sell-to" customers and 75,000 "ship-to" customers the challenge remains a tough one.

## Repeated Success

Since upgrading the Broadmeadows system, another Yakka company has also implemented a LXE RF data communications system, incorporating LXE's MX2 compact handheld computers with integrated scanners to control the movement of garments.

The logo for LXE Inc. features the letters "LXE" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is positioned to the upper right of the letter "E". Below the text, there is a stylized blue swoosh that curves under the letters.

**About LXE Inc.** LXE Inc. improves supply chain performance by applying over 30 years' experience developing wireless products and solutions. From wireless computers, advanced auto-ID technologies, and wireless network infrastructure, to our award-winning customer support - LXE's easy-to-use products are as reliable as the people who install and support them. Based in Norcross, Georgia, LXE also offers a full range of turnkey services, including radio integration, project and installation management, network design, technical support, and repair services. LXE is a wholly-owned subsidiary of EMS Technologies, Inc. (NASDAQ: ELMG), and has offices worldwide. For more information, visit [www.lxe.com](http://www.lxe.com).