ZETES CASE STUDY |Servair

Servair, automated monitoring of aircraft meal trays thanks to ZetesInterscan solutions

Founded as a subsidiary of Air France in 1971, Servair is France's leading aviation catering company and the third largest in the world, creating, preparing and delivering meal trays to its clients' aircraft. Servair has several subsidiaries and production sites in France producing 120,000 trays every day, using 1000 menus and 5300 different recipes.Every minute counts for Servair. Delays, changed flights and fluctuating passenger numbers, last-minute changes as well as the draconian punctuality imposed by aviation companies are the challenges Servair has to deal with on a daily basis. All of these challenges mean that the latest, up-to-date information must be available around the clock and the IT infrastructure must be reliable.

Improving traceability
Under these conditions, it had become increasingly difficult for Servair to continue using paper-based traceability systems to monitor products entering and leaving its production chain.

"This accumulation of data on paper made it difficult to monitor a specific product. In order to comply with the latest regulations and to be able to trace more products, Servair decided to implement an IT system and abandon the paper-based workflow," says Luc Mathiot, Research and Development Manager at the DSI department of Servair.

To solve the problem and maximise the processing of an increasing volume of information, the company decided to implement an automated data-collection system integrated into its existing PeopleSoft management software.

A total solution for the entire process
In the initial phase, Servair wanted to perform an audit of its traceability process. "ZetesInterscan had been selected for a previous project Servair had tendered for and when we announced an invite to tender for our TraçaFood project, ZetesInterscan's bid met our requirements perfectly, in terms of work methodology as well as from a financial perspective," explained Luc Mathiot.

Following the audit, ZetesInterscan proposed a total solution, in partnership with Intermec, whose products are ideally suited for Servair's needs, with regards to ergonomics and technological capability.

This solution was initially deployed at a pilot site which specialised in the handling of long-distance flights, Servair 1 in Roissy Charles de Gaulle.

A solution that interfaces with existing systems
Firstly, all the products had to be identified with a bar-coded label which could be processed by a portable data entry system, interfaced with PeopleSoft, in order to update and monitor tasks in real time.

"Our main suppliers are increasingly using barcodes to label their products and we agreed with them that we would use the EAN128 identification standard to log the necessary information required for the traceability of the parcels," continues Luc Mathiot.

The ZetesInterscan solution included the supply of label printers, portable Intermec terminals, and the redeployment of the RF infrastructure to give full wireless coverage. all of which was implemented by ZetesInterscan.

Managing orders and stock movements in real time

Each preparation phase involves the scanning of barcodes: when the raw ingredients are delivered, when they leave the stockroom, when the meals are prepared and when the trays are dressed and finally assembled for loading onto the planes. This data is transmitted in real time to PeopleSoft.

"Today, when a product enters the stockroom on the Servair 1 site, a barcode is systematically assigned in order to monitor the batch number. It is first scanned when it enters the cool area. For this purpose, ZetesInterscan has developed a programme which is adapted to the scan process of the PeopleSoft tables and checks incoming goods against an order number and a quantity per product," says Luc Mathiot.

In total, between 23,000 and 45,000 scans are performed each day, enabling the real-time monitoring of trays up to the point that they are loaded onto the plane.

When the production order is given by the ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning), following an order, the products are picked from the stockroom for the production lines using the Intermec CK31 portable terminals to scan the barcodes.

During the tray preparation phase, the food preparation process transforms the food products into meals by means of hot and cold cooking. In this phase, traceability is guaranteed by sending data to the PGI concerning the production order, the ingredients and the date and the hour of the preparation

The services department collects the various elements for the trays that are loaded on the planes. The Intermec portable terminals are also used extensively in this department which checks the conformity of the services against the specification of each client.

A bay check is performed when the trays are prepared for the relevant trolleys. These are identified with a flight number linked to the ATLAS label.

Finally, after the trolleys have been transferred from the production site to the loading bays, the last step performed by Servair 1 is the loading of the trays onto the aircraft.

"We have also set up a mirror ATLAS server with an interface which is capable of duplicating the ATLAS flight plans so the operators on the loading bay do not waste time retrieving information on the native server which is more difficult to use," says Thierry Dupont, supervisor of the ZetesInterscan installation. "This replication system allows operators to identify themselves on a terminal and scan the label which immediately indicates the loading location.

A return-on-investment which will soon be tangible

Automatic traceability now enables Servair employees to save time, save space and keep a history of the traceability for all the products on the site.

"Keeping track of the history of this data makes it possible to identify the routing of all materials or to quickly calculate the impact in the event that a product is recalled. For the users, this system allows them to integrate the data directly into the computer systems from their portable terminals, in particular for goods-in, goods taken from stock and the drawing up of inventories," concludes Luc Mathiot.

"Before, goods-in was a physical activity at the bay, followed by keying the data into the PeopleSoft program; this was also the case for goods taken from stock and inventories. Today, users appreciate the ability to perform these two tasks at once using the portable terminal. On the other hand, it's easy to use and for this reason it's been very well accepted by users."

With the productivity increase experienced at Servair 1, five other sites will now be equipped with the ZetesInterscan solution and the company has also decided to introduce the system at other production sites and subsidiaries in France.