



SUMMARY



Customer

Direct Relief
Santa Barbara, CA

Partner

Newcastle Systems
Haverhill, MA

Industry

Nonprofit

Challenge

Rapidly deliver donated medicines, life-saving supplies, food and other necessities from the warehouse to disaster-impacted areas around the world, as well as manage a dynamic product SKU inventory and ensure accurate shipments

Solution

- Zebra® rugged cordless handheld barcode scanners and desktop barcode label printers
- Newcastle Systems Mid-Range NB Series and Heavy-Duty PC Series Mobile Powered Workstations with PowerSwap Nucleus® Lithium Power System

Results

Equipping associates with mobile powered workstations:

- Increased receiving accuracy with a 20 percent efficiency gain, even with a 40 percent volume increase in the first month
- Reduced footsteps and fatigue for greater productivity
- Provided remote access to a new paperless warehouse management system

Direct Relief Cuts Complexity with Targeted Warehouse Investments

Direct Relief is focused on improving the health and lives of people affected by poverty, emergency or disaster. By quickly delivering donated medicine, life-saving supplies, food and other necessities to those who urgently need them, the nonprofit charitable organization is helping those that are most vulnerable in their greatest time of need.

Over the years, it has helped to support 29 million Americans who receive medical care from 12,000 federally subsidized community health centers, as well as individuals suddenly impacted by man-made and natural disasters throughout the world. Making this feat even more amazing, it has accomplished its mission with limited space and resources.

To make those goods and medical supplies readily available for rapid response within its warehouse space, Direct Relief is making its space work smarter with better inventory management and more efficient shipping processes.

Keeping Commitments to Partners

Ensuring its 130,000-square-foot warehouse in Santa Barbara, CA operates with maximum efficiency is not a luxury for Direct Relief. It's essential to meeting the needs of vulnerable populations throughout the world that need humanitarian aid quickly. Direct Relief has provided much-needed supplies and financial assistance to victims of the 2018-19 California wildfires and Hurricane Maria in 2017. Also, it delivered supplies to 31 countries, including more than 1 million masks, 48,000 gowns, more than 1.6 million gloves and other personal protective equipment to front-line workers a few weeks into the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020.

A more efficient warehouse is enabling Direct Relief to follow through on its commitments to partners such as federally funded community health centers. Direct Relief President and CEO Thomas Tighe affirms Direct Relief's commitment to the community health centers, pointing out that many of their patients are lower-income and socially vulnerable. "That's why Direct Relief leans in so heavily, supporting the public health efforts and day-to-day clinical work of the community health centers with private resources," he says.

“By using the mobile powered workstations to augment tasks, such as barcode scanning, we’re reducing the complexity involved in managing a diverse product inventory and getting aid to our beneficiaries faster.”

Dawn Long, senior vice president and chief operating officer, Direct Relief



Working Smarter Anywhere on the Floor

At the core of its enhanced operations, Direct Relief is using mobile powered workstations that have drastically improved worker productivity by reducing complexity. Relatively modest technology investments made by Direct Relief have proven that nonprofits can maximize the value they offer their beneficiaries and strategic partners. By boosting efficiency and order-fulfillment velocity in its warehouse, Direct Relief is making the most of its human and supply resources.

Direct Relief’s warehouse associates need to get the right goods picked, packed and shipped with minimal delays. That’s critical because warehouse inventory is donated, so product SKUs are constantly changing. The nonprofit has invested in worker augmentation with 12 NB/PC Series Powered Workstations, powered by PowerSwap Nucleus® Lithium Power Systems from Newcastle Systems, a Zebra partner. Among the industries it serves, Newcastle Systems has expertise in improving warehouse and logistics operations. For example, its mobile powered workstations have proven to increase the efficiency of receiving operations while reducing costs.

Associates can use the workstations to transport Zebra® rugged cordless handheld barcode scanners, desktop barcode label printers, and printing supplies between bays. They get new edge computing capabilities with real-time access to Direct Relief’s warehouse management system (WMS) from anywhere in the warehouse, enabling them to work smarter and faster.

The warehouse team’s new powered mobility gives associates everything they need to scan inbound goods in receiving, verify picked order accuracy as well as label and pack orders anywhere on the floor. Barcode label printing and scanning accuracy is particularly valuable for tracking pharmaceuticals.

Fewer Steps, Greater Efficiency

In receiving, associates scan inbound products into the WMS and place them into their correct put-away bins, eliminating inventory errors. The warehouse uses other workstations as mobile packing stations in picking areas. Now, associates don’t need to transport picked orders to a separate packing area—they can pack them on the spot.

“Now that we have these packing stations, we can actually box our orders and print labels right away—it’s instant,” says Direct Relief Outbound Operations Lead Martín Calderón Raya. “We’ve increased our efficiency in getting orders ready for shipping.”

SUCCESS STORY
DIRECT RELIEF

The workstations have also eliminated unnecessary human movement to reduce worker fatigue, improving work accuracy and increasing warehouse safety.

“We really love the flexibility,” Calderón Raya says. “We can move the carts to a particular area of the warehouse and be productive during the time it would otherwise take us to keep going back and forth. Reduced travel time has really helped our efficiency.”

The management team at Direct Relief has quantified the operational impact of the mobile workstations and barcode scanning technology. “We have improved the speed and accuracy of everything, from receiving and put-away to inventory management, all the way until an order is picked and packed and labels are generated from the cart,” says Tighe. “In the first month, we had a 40 percent increase in batches received, but we processed them more accurately and in 20 percent less time.”

Just as importantly, the upgrades to Direct Relief’s warehouse operations support its charge of providing direct and targeted assistance to the particular circumstances and needs of the world’s most vulnerable and at-risk populations. “By using the mobile powered workstations to augment tasks, such as barcode scanning, we’re reducing the complexity involved in managing a diverse product inventory and getting aid to our beneficiaries faster,” says Dawn Long, senior vice president and chief operating officer at Direct Relief.

To learn more about Direct Relief and donate to its mission, visit www.newcastlesys.com/donate-direct-relief.



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