

VELOCITY VIDEO CASE HISTORY

A DC VELOCITY SPEED CHALLENGE

Direct benefit

Direct Relief has turned to Newcastle Systems for Mobile Powered Workstations that speed the handling of crucial medicines and health care supplies.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS HAVE TO WORK SMART, AS every dollar they save in distribution can be redirected to those who most benefit from their work. That's why Direct Relief invests in technology to reduce its processing time and costs.

Based in Santa Barbara, Calif., Direct Relief has been helping the world's needy for nearly 70 years. Two successful businessmen who fled the Nazis during World War II founded Direct Relief, originally to help friends they left behind in Europe rebuild their lives after the war. It has since grown into an effective relief network that provides medicines and health supplies to refugees and the disadvantaged within 80 countries. It also works within all 50 U.S. states.

Direct Relief operates a single distribution facility in Santa Barbara. Pharmaceutical companies and medical manufacturers donate most of the medicines and supplies that the facility distributes. Storage space is limited in the 24,000-square-foot building, so the ability to receive and then ship products fast is crucial. That's especially important when people are in great need.

"As the old saying goes, 'If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right.' That's particularly true if it's the right thing to do," says Thomas Tighe, the organization's president and CEO. "The right thing is to serve people at risk of getting sick or staying sick longer or dying sooner than they otherwise might simply because of where they are born and their income status. So for us, every efficiency we can squeeze out of the operation really does get to the point of helping more people."

MOVING MEDICINES

Besides gaining efficiencies, there is the critical requirement of reaching 100 percent accuracy when distributing medicines. Since Direct Relief's inventory is composed of donated items, SKUs are constantly changing, which also adds to the complexity.

In order to improve speed while still maintaining accuracy, the

facility recently moved to paperless processing and introduced new mobile carts with integrated power supply from Newcastle Systems, which has improved operations tremendously. The 12 carts are currently used for inbound receiving and double-checking picked orders, and as mobile pack stations. Their mobility allows them to move to wherever the work requires them.

The industrial carts feature Newcastle's new PowerSwap Nucleus Lithium Power System that can run just about any peripheral Direct Relief could want on a cart. The receiving carts, for instance, carry a laptop, a monitor, a scanner, a printer, an electronic scale, supplies, and a wastebasket. Both the carts and medicines are wheeled to storage locations or forward picking bins for direct putaway. This eliminates the need for additional handoffs and assures that the products are placed in the correct locations.

"We are not tied to a wall plug with the battery system, so it allows us to be mobile now," explains Sean Copeland, operations manager.

The carts used in the packing area also contain computers and other peripherals, including printers to create shipping labels and packing lists. The carts' batteries provide more than enough power to operate for the entire shift, but they are also hot-swappable should the need arise for more power.

"They are very flexible and with the ability to hot swap, we are not losing any of the work we are doing," adds Copeland. "The carts have worked great. We started with five carts and within two weeks, we ordered five more. Once we got them on the floor and set up, everyone was clamoring to work with them."

The combination of paperless processing and the introduction of the carts has led to some impressive results. "In the first month that it went live, we had an increase of 40 percent in the number of batches that we received. We did them more accurately and in 20 percent less time," says Tighe.



To see a Velocity Video of the Newcastle portable carts in action at Direct Relief, go to dcvtv.com and click on Channel 2.