

Wireless made simple

Summary

Wireless technology is a relatively simple technology. It is also one of the most enabling technology today. Why? It allows the linking of specialty devices to the business network. Tasks like stocktakes, goods receipting and factory assembly lines are now a lot simpler to perform due to the advent of portable barcode units. The power of wireless is that it allows you to link a device, wherever it is, to software running anywhere on the business network. Sales people can access price lists, customer support people can check service manuals and regardless of where they are.

What is Wireless?

It is two devices communicating using radio. Typically a device (eg. printer, PDA, portable barcode scanner) transmits information to a communications device. This device is called an access hub. The hub is usually connected to either a PC or directly to the business network. As long as there is an access hub within range, devices can communicate with software throughout the company.



Device

Software Issues

The key to wireless technology is the ability to communicate with software applications. People on the warehouse floor need to communicate with the Warehousing software. People performing stocktakes need to communicate with the asset management software.



Access Hub

In the case of a printer, communicating with most software is a simple issue. However other software applications have limited ability to communicate with wireless devices.

Range of wireless devices

Wireless devices can communicate over a range of 30 –50 metres through clear air. Typically a site survey is performed to determine whether there are any impediments to the wireless signal (eg. lift wells).

Wireless Solutions

A number of solutions have emerged recently that allow simple connectivity of devices:

1. Telnet – The Telnet utility has been around for many years. Essentially the portable device uses Telnet to provide a miniature window into the software application running on a server.
2. Windows connectivity – Many PDA-style devices allow Windows style connectivity into Microsoft Access/Excel ©. Connectivity such as ODBC is also available via wireless technologies.
3. Flat file – A very simple way of transferring data is via a 'flat file'. This means that the data gathered by the portable device is written to a file. The software application then reads this file when it wishes to process the data.



The above solutions are only a subset of the many ways in which wireless devices can connect to software applications. Contact Mr Scanman to discuss your wireless requirements.