

LXE Support *Impresses Cloverleaf* - and Its Customers.

CASE STUDY

CLOVERLEAF COLD STORAGE. Cloverleaf, one of the largest privately held public refrigerated warehouses in the United States, is family owned, and dedicated to uncompromising quality and service.

Cloverleaf Cold Storage offers state of the art warehousing and custom meat fabrication and packaging services in its Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri and Ohio facilities.



"Anyone can have a big, cold room," says Dave Kaplan. "Servicing the customer is what our business is all about."

Kaplan is one of the principles of Cloverleaf Cold Storage (www.cloverleaf.com), the eighth largest cold storage warehouse company in the US. The 50+-year-old, Midwestern, family-owned company has grown to that status by providing customers with an uncompromising, seamless level of service - and demanding that of their vendors as well.

Not All RF Vendors Are Created Equal

Unfortunately, Sioux City, Iowa-based Cloverleaf found that not all RF vendors shared that point of view when they started to replace truck-mounted terminals, deployed as part of an application upgrade to the company's state-of-the-art warehousing and custom meat fabrication and packaging facilities, located in Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri and Ohio.

Three years ago, Cloverleaf began the conversion of its existing warehouse management system to Delfour's (acquired by Headwater Technology Solutions and then by Accellos, Inc.) Smart Enterprise third party logistics (3PL) management system to simplify and centralize management of all of the company's warehouses. Cloverleaf started the conversion with its paper-based facilities and one new warehouse being installed with RF systems, and later integrated the remaining RF-driven facilities. As part of that upgrade, they purchased a brand of forklift-mounted terminals recommended by the software developer.

The new units had the large screens Cloverleaf required to run its application. But what they didn't have was a fast, efficient support network to go with them. When Cloverleaf tried to get the computers serviced, the trouble started.

"Their support did not meet our expectations," says Kaplan. "If you don't have a service contract, they let the units sit for a couple of weeks before they repair them, even if they were under warranty." Complaints to the factory didn't help.

"The salesman was too busy working on a large sale to get back to me," lamented Kaplan.

Wanted: Rugged Computers with Warm Service

So Kaplan and his colleagues went out into the market seeking a rugged forklift-mounted solution backed by the service they expected. They ultimately selected LXE VX7 forklift-mounted computers with full-screen displays.

"The issues we had with the other vendors were the reasons we love LXE," says Kaplan. "The technical support is phenomenal. You send it in, and contract or not, they turn it in three days."

Early issues getting the software to function well with the hardware were resolved quickly. In one case LXE sent a field engineer, on two days notice, to Cloverleaf's LeMars, Iowa facility to look at what the customer thought was a problem with their LXE equipment. "It turned out that the problem had nothing to do with LXE; it was the way the formatting was being sent from the Smart Enterprise program," says Kaplan. "Within 10 days we had a new version of the VX7 terminal emulation software that solved the issue."

In another case LXE shipped a packet sniffer to Cloverleaf's Massillon, Ohio facility and provided an engineer to read the packet sniffs that the customer had taken just a few minutes earlier. In less than 15 minutes the LXE engineer was able to determine a setting on the VX7 that was improperly set causing multiple issues. "I was able to change the setting and solve the problem the same day I took the packet sniff," Kaplan says. "Every problem I take to LXE is addressed in a timely manner."

"That turnaround time makes a big impact on both budget and productivity," Kaplan says. He's able to support all of his



RF warehouse facilities with one spare terminal. "I simply couldn't do that if service took three weeks," Kaplan explains. "The ability to swap memory cards, with all the unit information, from the down VX7 to the spare VX7, eliminates problems with programming replacement units in the field which we used to have to do," Kaplan expounds.

Application Flexibility

The application runs via LXE's RFTerm® multi-session terminal emulator. With RFTerm, VX7 operators can log onto multiple sessions at the same time. So an operator active in a putaway session can arrive at the location, make the putaway, and then toggle over to the pick application to find a nearby pick task. Previously, that forklift would drive back to the receiving area empty, because accessing the pick application would have meant signing off of putaway and initiating a new session every time. "We didn't have that capability before LXE," Kaplan says.

The VX7's large screen makes it possible to click through to the other sessions easily, with fonts in sizes operators can actually read. The color screen displays each type of activity in a different color, making it easier for operators to locate the active session screen.

Cloverleaf also wants to allow for future uses which might require the VX7's CE .NET operating system. Kaplan explains, "I am currently testing the ability for VX7 operators to remotely connect the unit to the IT-Support desk in Sioux City when they have an issue with the Smart Enterprise program."

The VX7 lift truck-mounted computer has also proven stellar at surviving the drastic temperature changes as forklifts navigate from freezers, at 22 degrees below zero, to docks that might be 60 degrees above, without condensation. Strain relief on scanner cables keeps those units operating properly. "That must have saved us maintenance, since this can be a frequent failure point on other terminals," Kaplan notes.

LXE also accommodated Cloverleaf's preferences when it came to deploying LXE's session manager, TM1. "Rather than install the LXE supplied hardware and software, we wanted to install the TM1, software only, on a boot from SAN IBM blade center with auto failover redundant blades," Kaplan explains. "LXE worked with me on the phone to help me install it that way."

A Look Ahead

Cloverleaf is migrating to more LXE computers as older equipment fails, and any future implementations will include the VX7s. And although customers will likely never lay eyes on Cloverleaf's LXE computers or perhaps even set foot in their warehouses, they're definitely impacted by them. Kaplan explains, "Anytime I can get equipment turned around and back to me in a timely manner that makes me more efficient. LXE services me the way I would want to service my customers, and service is my business."



About LXE Inc. LXE Inc. improves supply chain performance by applying over 36 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.