> "We've increased our picking efficiency by 42% in the course of just four months—it now stands at 94%."
>
> KEN MEYERS | DIRECTOR, INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Schwing America, Inc.

Global manufacturer of concrete construction equipment improves the reliability, accuracy, responsiveness and flexibility of mobile data collection using RFgen Mobile Foundations for SAP.

At a glance...

Industry
Construction Equipment Manufacturing

Application
Inventory Management
Warehouse Management

Environment
SAP 6.0

Schwing America, Inc.—part of Schwing Group—is a leading, global manufacturer of concrete construction equipment, with production facilities on four continents. In order to increase efficiency through automation, Ken Meyers, Director of Information Systems, deployed RFgen Mobile Foundations for SAP in the company's primary manufacturing facility for North America located in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

The Challenge

Schwing America operates a 40 acre facility with seven buildings to support its manufacturing plant and has used the SAP ERP system for many years. Warehouse and plant personnel collected data and performed warehouse transactions using mobile barcode scanners and a legacy data collection system put in place in 2004. But as that system aged, it became less and less reliable.

"As the system aged out, four areas became serious constraints for us: reliability, latency, lack of functionality and the absence of a true development platform," said Meyers. "Every day it seemed like there was a non-stop line of guys walking into the technical support area with locked up barcode scanners. We also had a big latency problem. After a scan, you might have to wait five or six seconds for it to respond. As the company grew, we needed additional functionally to enhance efficiency, but we did not have a development platform, so we would have to continually go back to the manufacturer for any modifications or new transaction solutions."

The Solution

The implementation team evaluated several solutions, ultimately choosing RFgen Mobile Foundations for SAP, a suite of pre-written, SAP-validated data collection solutions that feature real-time, bi-directional information exchange with SAP. RFgen supports real-time wireless barcoding and mobile enterprise application development to improve efficiency in manufacturing and warehouse operations.

"Our number one requirement for third-party software is that it's SAP-certified. We also looked at RFgen's installed base and tried to draw a parallel between our business needs and some of their current users. Our strategy lined up well with the RFgen product offering," said Meyers.

RFgen sent an analyst on-site to spend a few days on the shop floor to learn about Schwing's business requirements. In addition to providing the mobile applications, RFgen advised Schwing about new barcode printer software options they were reviewing to add additional flexibility to the warehouse operations.

"RFgen did a great job from start to end, and they put the right people on the project. All too often, you get only the technical person on the project, and what you ideally like to have is a resource that has a balance of sound technical skills and a good understanding of the business processes. RFgen provided a clear understanding of the application and architectural structure coupled with a well-structured project plan," Meyers recalled.

RFgen
DISCOVER THE POWER OF FLEXIBILITY

The Result

Just months after roll out, RFgen has already made an immediate impact on operational efficiency at Schwing. RFgen has enabled Schwing to:

- Improve picking efficiency by 42%.
- Increase picking accuracy to 99.83% for world-class results.
- Improve reliability and accuracy over their legacy system and eliminate latency issues.
- Gain better insights into labor usage on the shop floor.
- Develop future mobile warehouse and production floor mobile apps in house, using the included source code.
- Save time by simplifying cycle counts and material lookups.
- Gain efficiency by performing consolidated picks for production and sales orders.
- Direct workers through the warehouse to increase efficiency of putaway.

Issue to Production Orders or Sales Orders

RFgen improved Schwing's existing process for issuing materials to both production and sales orders by enabling workers to consolidate multiple picks and pick them on one pass through the warehouse. "Consolidated picking on the mobile side was a big enhancement that we did not have before. Our team no longer has to 'one off' the production orders and sales orders, so that is a nice efficiency gain," Meyers said.

RFgen Simplifies Routine Tasks

One of the surprises delivered with RFgen is that automating relatively small routine tasks made a huge difference to the warehouse employees. "Our workers love being able to scan or type in a material number and see material availability throughout the facility on their wireless devices. They really raved about that ability, because before they had to go to an SAP workstation," explained Meyers.

Cycle Counts

RFgen has made it easy to complete cycle counts in the warehouse using only a mobile scanner. Meyers said, "RFgen allows an individual to go to the bin location and cycle count on the fly. Before, workers had to create a cycle count list and generate paperwork at an SAP workstation. It's a huge efficiency gain for the warehouse workers not to have to go back and forth—they can do it all on the floor."

Directed Putaway

Most of the materials used in Schwing's production come in large crates or container loads. The warehouse team receives these materials in bulk at a staging area. Workers enter receipts directly into SAP, then use handheld scanners running RFgen to pick materials up at staging and drop them off in the correct locations. "We scan groups of products, then workers get on fork trucks and put them away. RFgen directs our workers through the most appropriate sequence for putaways going right down the line," said Meyers.

Better Insight into Production Labor

Schwing has used RFgen very extensively for labor collection on the production floor. The company uses RFgen to let workers clock on and off during production orders. The IT team has built applications on the back end for analysis, enabling management to identify trends or problems in labor utilization.

World-Class Picking Accuracy

RFgen made an immediate impact on the efficiency of picking in the warehouse. "We track what is going on in the warehouse on a daily, weekly and monthly basis from a performance standpoint. And we have seen some really nice improvements. We've increased our picking efficiency by 42% in the course of just four months—it now stands at 94%," said Meyers.

Greater efficiency must be matched with equally high accuracy. With RFgen, picking accuracy now stands at 99.83%; operations achieving greater than 99.5% picking accuracy are considered world-class. "The operations team is very happy with the performance of the system and how it is helping them to increase overall material handling accuracy," Meyers said.

RFgen Empowers Future In-house Development

In addition to providing superior reliability and accuracy, RFgen also provides a mobile development platform.

"As our business continues to grow, we will receive new requirements. And we need to be able to provide a viable solution moving forward. With RFgen, we can do that in-house with minimal effort and that is a win-win, for the company and the business units we support. We wanted to have some control over our own destiny and to be flexible enough to support the business without making big projects out of every request," said Meyers.

Meyers was very pleased with the on time, on budget deployment of RFgen and concluded, "It was a great experience. The people at RFgen know the value of having a good business relationship with their clients. They produce a solid solution, and we have a great relationship with their developers. The project went smoothly with excellent collaboration. Overall, it was an absolute win for our company."

1101 Investment Blvd., Suite 250
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
Phone: (888) 426-2286

www.rfgen.com

RFgen®
DISCOVER THE POWER OF FLEXIBILITY

About RFgen Software

RFgen Software helps organizations reduce supply chain implementation costs and increase accuracy and efficiency with the industry's most reliable and flexible mobile data collection software and supply chain automation solutions.

Enabling you to increase productivity by providing your mobile workforce with real-time and on-demand access to enterprise data, RFgen's mobile data collection solutions easily connect Windows, Android and Apple iOS mobile devices like barcode scanners, tablets, handheld computers, voice recognition devices and more to your back office ERP systems and databases, including Oracle's JD Edwards, Oracle E-Business Suite, SAP, SAP Business One, Deltek Costpoint and more.

In business since 1983, RFgen is known in the manufacturing and distribution industries for its solid, high-quality products and high customer satisfaction ratings among its more than 2,800 customers. With a global reach and local touch, RFgen and its network of more than 140 certified solution partners can support your organization no matter where your operations are located around the world.