

Background Information:

Inventory optimization is crucial to any retail business. We've seen businesses going down because of bloated inventory. Their shops have become a blackhole - it keeps on sucking money (items), while little money is produced. Businesses need to keep tight control on their inventory. Because our store is a business with average net profit of 10%, a slip of control on inventory can have disastrous consequences pretty quickly. On the other hand, optimized inventory can increase net profit. For example, being able to find out which are fast-selling, high-profit items and focus on that. Our shops currently sell (cycle) their entire inventory in about 2 months. We plan to cut it down into 1 month or less. However, to be able to optimize the inventory, first we need to be able to profile it; (eg: accurately record how many items we have at any given time).

Solution Tools:

- LaserChamp II Bluetooth Scanner
- SerialMagic Professional Software
- Nokia E70 Handheld Smartphone
- Wi-fi internet connection



Using the LaserChamp scanner will give us great degree of flexibility. We will be able to develop a special software for it to interface to our system, so we can audit our inventory much faster. This will be possible with the wireless nature of the LaserChamp and the flexibility of SerialMagic Professional.

Business Situation:

Currently other players here, like Carrefour (France's Walmart), are using handheld devices costing US1200 and upwards to audit their inventories. Even then, they still need to close their stores down to do this. We've devised a way which enable us to audit our inventories reliably while the store is running. Of course this is pretty significant, we don't need to disturb our business (and our customers), while still able to optimize our inventory. However, it doesn't work with current handheld barcode scanners, so we're doing it by paper. Needless to say, this is rather cumbersome. It makes the process goes much slower than it should be.

Solution:

We have finished developing the interface to our web-apps for your scanner and testing it. Now it's currently being used to audit our inventory in one of our supermarkets.

We use the LaserChamp II with SerialMagic Pro in tandem with Nokia E70. The E70, old but reliable, provides connectivity to our system via Wifi, and interfaces to it via its built-in browser. The LaserChamp II scanner is a great product - it works as advertised. It enables us to input the data straight to our IT system; from anywhere in the store. Small & light, it doesn't tire the users even after prolonged use. Plus it is very affordable. Similar solutions from other vendors cost at least twice, sometimes thrice. Imagine for yourself the savings in a big-scale deployment.

A more detailed, technical-oriented, article related to our efforts has been written as an article here :

<http://harry.sufehmi.com/archives/2009-03-27-2094/>

Future Plans...

Now we're also thinking about using it on our POS / cashiers. It's lighter than our current scanners, and it can go wireless as well; giving more flexibility & mobility to the cashiers.