



# Distribution Centre Sortation

## Case Study

### Aspray Parcel Sortation System Doubles Throughput

#### Background

To survive in today's highly competitive market place, the more successful nationwide express parcel carriers are fast, reliable and able to cope with large volumes of consignments during peak delivery periods. To be able to do this, they need to be well structured and have the people and systems in place to ensure parcels are delivered to customers on time, every time.



One company that has established an excellent reputation for service, especially with manufacturing and engineering firms is Aspray Transport. Created over 20 years ago, Aspray is one of the largest privately owned specialist carriers in the UK and offers a range of services and tailor-made logistics solutions for consignments that are difficult to handle. Its customers include producers of nuts, bolts, rivets and pipe fittings, items which have to suitably packed in parcels, or cloth and nylon bags. Because of their size and shape, these items often defy conventional handling by large, sophisticated sortation lines that are more suited to manageable packaging and, therefore, need to be handled by a specialist carriers.

#### Challenge

Aspray offers its customers nationwide coverage via eleven distribution centers, all of which are served by a central gateway at the firm's head office in Willenhall, near Birmingham. The Willenhall main hub has seen its sortation system evolve over the years to meet ever more stricter requirements for unloading, sorting and distributing rising volumes of parcels and out-of-gauge, oversize and plain 'ugly' looking packages. There was a high level of reliance on operators to read addresses and divert packages down the appropriate chute, the system suffered from interruptions from operator change-overs and miss sorts.

#### Solution

Aspray brought in AMH Services as the main contractor to upgrade the firm's manual sortation system, and to help it move to semi-automatic and automatic feeds. ASE, the specialist SCADA/PLC systems integrator, provided the control operations.

AMH and ASE installed and integrated control and automation technology that read address codes and divert parcels to their correct destinations.

Parcels and bags which now enter the system are immediately checked by an operator for local delivery. Those items are manually diverted to a separate chute, while the other parcels are fed into a straight line of conveyors and pass under two bar code scanners that search for an Aspray coded label and then automatically identify which of 14 destinations to send the parcel to.

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#### Benefits

- Throughput increased in excess of 50%
- Consistent performance
- Quicker recovery from system failure

#### Project Statistics

- Nightly throughput of 10000 parcels
- Barcode scanning
- Voice actuated sortation
- Sortation integrated with control system

#### Systems Expertise

- Magellis HMI
- Report generation
- Fault diagnosis
- High speed sortation