

FIGLEAVES IMPLEMENTS A NEW GLOBAL LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME USING CASIO IT-500 HANDHELDS

Casio IT-500 handhelds have improved the warehousing practices and increased efficiency

Figleaves' (www.figleaves.com) philosophy is to provide a simple, one-stop shop for all underwear, hosiery and swimwear – whatever your size, sense of style and budget. The company is committed to providing the greatest selection of brands available on the net or in the high street, and to make the shopping experience as easy and enjoyable as possible.

The company combines the benefit of the latest innovations in online shopping with a solid retail background. In the five years that they have been selling underwear they have grown from a 4 to a 140-strong team with a growing customer base which has taken them into the top 20 of UK internet retailers.

Figleaves have shipped orders to 66 countries worldwide. The company has its own call centre, distribution system and ambitious plans for global expansion. Recently, Figleaves set up an in-site storefront on the Amazon.com US web site.

The Casio IT-500 was chosen as the most suitable mobile device due to its combination of usability and functionality. Figleaves now use the device for receiving and putting away stock, inventory management, picking orders on a guided walk route, and shipping.



The IT-500



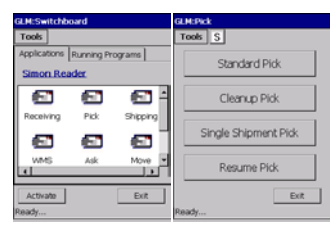
GLM Functionality Available on the Casio IT-500:

- RF Networking – IEEE802.11b
- Integrated Bar Code Scanner
- Stock book-in application (receive)
- Stock put away or movement (move)
- Stock or storage enquiry (ask)
- Perpetual Inventory (PI)
- Order Picking (pick)
- Order Shipment (shipping)

Early in 2002, Figleaves took the decision to develop a new Logistics Management System to ensure that they had a robust, scalable solution to handle their complete warehouse management requirements, from goods in through to stock put away, order picking, packing and shipment, inventory management, and customer returns. The new software would need to be capable of dealing with Figleaves' increasing sales volume, and easily allow for expansion to new warehouse premises, both in the UK and eventually overseas.

Figleaves commissioned Badger Software Limited, a Microsoft Certified Partner, to develop their entire logistics suite, including the .Net Compact Framework applications run on mobile devices.

The devices were supplied to Badger by Blackroc Technologies, one of the leading providers of products and solutions in the rapidly growing fields of mobile and hand held computing and identification technologies.



The challenge:

Figleaves needed a mobile wireless solution as part of a large-scale Global Logistics Management development programme. The applications needed to be scaleable, fast, and simple to use. In a retail environment such as theirs, turning around customer orders as fast as possible and stock accuracy at all points in the logistics chain are both essential features.

Mobile devices were to be used in all areas of the suite of applications where operators would be moving around the warehouse. The devices needed to be robust and easy to use, with a reliable battery life. The software also needed to be as “stateless” as possible so that an operator could stop work on a stock-receipt or order-pick and resume work at a later time at the same point, even if they re-started on another device.

The solution:

Figleaves contacted Badger Software Limited, a software development company which it had already used in the successful development of their Sales Order Processing and Product Data Management software applications. Work commenced on a new, component based system built using Microsoft .Net Framework architecture, and a Microsoft SQL Server Database.

One of the key requirements of the new solution was to make Figleaves warehouse operatives as flexible and mobile as possible, particularly when checking stock or storage locations, and picking orders ready for despatch. The decision was taken to develop the mobile applications using the Microsoft .Net Compact Framework running on Casio IT-500 CE.Net Devices, communicating with the GLM application server using 802.11b wireless connection.

As part of the initial system design and specification, a variety of mobile devices were evaluated. The Casio IT-500 was identified as the most suitable device for the Figleaves warehouse, due to several factors:

- The Windows CE.Net operating system is installed as standard
- The IT-500's form-factor and colour display were ideal for the type of applications envisaged.
- Casio UK were able to provide high-quality technical backup during development and implementation.
- Integrated barcode scanner and 802.11b were available as standard

Badger Software designed and developed the mobile applications using modular, component based technology. A user logs in to the Global Logistics Management “switchboard” and they are then presented with a list of available applications which is determined by which application roles each user belongs to. All applications have been designed to provide minimum disruption in the event of an operator stopping and re-starting work. For example it is possible for an order picker to start picking a large batch of orders on a trolley, then stop work, and for another picker to take over just by scanning the trolley barcode (all stock containers in the warehouse have a barcode). The next instruction that they will see on their IT-500 will be the same one that the original operator would have seen before stopping work.

Figleaves new Logistics Management software went live in late September 2003, in a new warehouse facility in Haverhill, Cambs. From day one, Casio IT-500s have been used for all operational areas requiring a mobile device.

Figleaves personnel use the IT-500 to book in stock, move it to the warehouse pick-face, pick orders, and finalise shipment. The combination of a fast, wireless mobile device and the Microsoft .Net framework has produced an intuitive solution to underpin the company's plans for future growth.

The fast and simple to use stock management software allows Figleaves users to scan any container in the warehouse and see what it contains. If it contains other types of container, the user can “drill down” to the lowest (stock) level.

Any user can immediately identify all locations for a stock item, simply by scanning the item's barcode.

The new picking application, used in conjunction with backend software which calculates optimum box-size for shipments, is expected to provide a significant improvement in order fulfilment time.

Figleaves were able to move stock into their new warehouse over a single weekend using the new applications to move the stock into picking locations. Within a week, the number of shipments being processed each day was already exceeding their previous system.

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Stock keeping is just one type of application already in use on the Casio range of handheld terminals and Pocket PCs. Casio along with selected partners, can offer a wide range of hardware and software solutions including bar-code scanning and data capture, field force automation, healthcare and transportation applications.

About Casio Electronics Co Ltd:

Casio Electronics Co Ltd is the UK subsidiary of Casio Computer Co Ltd and is a major manufacturer of industrial handheld computers and other corporate and consumer electronics products. The Mobile Technology Division is dedicated to the provision of business-changing solutions, offering a range of products suited to applications for a wide range of industries such as transport and retail.

Visit www.casio.co.uk/mobility for more information.

About Badger Software Ltd:

Badger Software Limited is a provider of business software solutions primarily using Microsoft technologies. Based in Reading, Badger Software has been providing robust reliable solutions since 1994, and is proud of the long-term relationships it has been able to develop with its clients and business partners. The company is a Microsoft Certified Partner of many years standing, and their client list ranges across government departments, police forces, food manufacturing companies, and of course online retailers such as Figleaves.com. Since the launch of Microsoft .Net Framework, and the Compact Framework for mobile devices, Badger Software has developed .Net solutions for several of its clients.

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