

## From concept to completion: Wireless works to save time

By Lois Fenimore

Every new product begins as an idea, and everyday new product ideas are taken and made into a reality at Avnet Applied Computing. Building and delivering customized computing products ranging from PC systems, servers, retail point-of-sale systems, mass storage systems, and industrial data collection systems, requires flexibility and attention to detail. Constant communication is the only way to ensure that all the elements that make up an order are complete and accurate.

### Success in wireless network integration

Avnet is able to succeed at their tasks by communicating using a wireless network. This is done with a Wi-Fi 802.11b wireless network from Intermec Technologies Corporation. This technology is making life easier for the more than 30 technicians who handle up to 500 orders per month at Avnet Applied Computing's Integration Solution Center in Phoenix, Arizona, shown in Figure 1. The technicians are working more efficiently and boosting productivity thanks to the new wireless connectivity.

Previously, each integration order would be accompanied by an individual hard copy of the order's detailed build instructions throughout each of the flexible work cells, to maintain the Center's ISO 9001:2000 and 5-Sigma quality standards. Each technician, after completing their assigned tasks, would sign off on steps individually along the integration path. Integration build carts were wheeled to wired computers at numerous times throughout each build for batch updates, and any questions arising with an integration would require a technician to leave the cell to find answers to the issue.

Now, with the Intermec wireless network, each work cell has a wireless laptop that goes with the integration. Integration instructions are read and signed off electronically, and carts are no longer

needed to be wheeled to central wired access points for updating. The wireless connectivity reduces the chance for integration errors and allows the technician to stay with his or her cell throughout the build, which is the ultimate goal in this environment.

As part of the network installation, Intermec technicians perform a site survey to determine site-specific requirements, configure a network that will meet a center's needs, and finally install all access points and wireless cards throughout the center. As a result Avnet is now able to better manage the inevitable bursts in demand that occur, which in turn lets the company better exceed its customers' expectations.

"We've already seen a 10 to 15 minute gain in productivity per technician per order, and we have more than 30 technicians and 500 orders per month," said Fane Friberg, vice president of operations at Avnet Applied Computing. "That computes to thousands of hours gained per month already, and there's still plenty of untapped potential. We're still optimizing our own workflows based on the new wireless connectivity. The wireless infrastructure allows us to improve our efficiency without sacrificing our 5-Sigma quality during month end and other peak operating times."

Since Avnet also serves as a critical channel partner for Intermec, any benefits Avnet realizes in terms of efficiency are passed through to Intermec's customers. The wireless investment benefits Intermec, Avnet, and their mutual customers alike.

Figure 1



*Lois Fenimore is a senior communications specialist for Intermec Technologies Corp. In this role, she manages the company's media relations' activities for vertical markets including transportation/logistics and retail. She also manages public relations activities for the company's channel sales group.*

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