

## Case Study: Bentalls

### Overview

Bentalls is a premium department store, first established in 1867 in Kingston in the Greater London area. Now a division of Fenwick Limited, there is a second Bentalls store in Bracknell.

Bentalls features high-end brands across its menswear, womenswear, childrenswear, cosmetics and home departments, including Dolce & Gabbana, Nicole Farhi and DKNY. The store prides itself on providing excellent personal service and a vibrant in-store shopping experience.

A key factor in any retailer's success is maintaining proper control over inventory, from first receipt of goods to removal of unsold stock at end of season. Like many large retailers, Bentalls had implemented automated stocktaking solutions to speed up the process, including handheld scanners that recorded item data and fed it back into store accounting systems.

However, after several years, Bentalls found that its handheld units had become unreliable, with poor battery life, and were somewhat cumbersome in how they transmitted data into the store accounting system. Also, it owned only 25 units and had to rent approximately 125 more for each biannual stocktake. As a result, stocktaking had turned into a much more laborious and time consuming exercise than was necessary, and was costing the retailer in added man hours, product maintenance and process inefficiency.

### Business need

Bentalls sought to improve the reliability and longevity of its handheld units in order to shorten its stocktaking process, improve accuracy and reduce costs. In addition, it wanted to enhance the process for transmitting stock data into its accounting system so that reporting and analysis could begin in a much more timely fashion. After researching several different models, Bentalls contacted BancTec, a primary reseller for handheld units in the UK.

### Bentalls and BancTec's solution

BancTec and Bentalls discussed and researched available models, and together decided that the CipherLab 8300 unit best fit Bentalls' needs. The units offered held a battery charge for 270 hours, versus three to five hours for the previous units, thus they would last the entire stocktake week. Plus they had more flexibility to handle other tasks, such as recording receipt of merchandise in the distribution centre.

Bentalls also asked BancTec to develop a bespoke stocktake program to reside on the new units. This custom program added new functionality and was also delivered directly to Bentalls, along with in-depth training, so that Bentalls could maintain the code in-house and alter it as necessary.

BancTec also implemented a direct Ethernet connection so that the handheld units could be placed in the charging cradle and transfer their data back to the head office in Kingston.



### The results

- The long charge held by the handheld units, which eliminates the need for many data downloads and interruptions, and which enables employees to scan thousands of items at a time versus hundreds, has shortened stocktaking by 5 nights. This saves a tremendous number of man-hours and overtime pay.
- The risk of data loss, from units that run out of battery power, has also been eliminated. The CipherLab units have the capability to maintain scanned data even in the event that battery power is fully drained.

# Bentalls

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- Bentalls has been able to purchase 175 handheld units rather than hire the number needed for stocktaking. This enables it to maintain full control over the quality of the units and to eliminate two days of "prep time" for the IT department, which previously had to load its stocktake program onto the rented units.
- The long battery life of the handhelds also enabled Bentalls to purchase only 15 charging cradles for 175 units, thus saving additional direct costs.
- The Ethernet connection to Bentalls' accounting department enables the handheld units to transmit data directly into the next business process. This eliminated having to first connect the units to a PC and transferring the data to the PC as an intermediary step, saving time and reducing the risk of lost data.
- Bentalls is now able to utilise the handheld units for other processes, such as receiving stock by scanning the product supply bar code and checking pricing of items in-store.
- The new stocktake application operates exactly as specified, and provides Bentalls the flexibility to maintain it in-house, versus the added cost of paying for each adjustment to the program.

### The client's response

"BancTec listened closely to our needs and worked with us to develop a solution that saves time and money, and which reduces risk. They were very easy to work with and responded immediately whenever there were any problems during the implementation. As a result, the first stocktake we had with the new units was considered by all a great success. The users took to the new devices well, they were more reliable than the previous units, and the program was easy to use. Our IT department actually received calls from managers complementing the new system. For Bentalls, the CipherLab units with BancTec's support have proved a perfect match for our stocktaking needs and improved this vital business process."