



Strategic partnership with TOREX Retail provides Virgin Trains with a European First in the Rail Industry

Virgin Trains is one of the largest of the UK's Train Operating Companies, operating two 15-year franchises which together form Britain's only national rail network. On a daily basis 374 services are operated between 120 cities and towns in England, Scotland and Wales. Its key markets are business and leisure travel in the UK and it carries 31 million passengers annually. Currently over £2billion is being spent on 131 new trains.

TOREX Retail has developed a system which provides Virgin Trains with management information to help make business decisions.

On-board service solution

TOREX Retail's £5M contract to deliver an Interactive Retail Information System for Virgin Trains called for an industry leading, on-board customer service solution. The end-to-end catering management system includes on-board point of sale equipment and software integrated with the Virgin Train systems through a TOREX Retail head office solution, linking into the Virgin Train logistics supply chain partner, Rail Gourmet.

New train technology

Virgin Trains' aim was to have the system available for the next generation of trains following its considerable investment in new train technology, so TOREX Retail extensively tested its system for compliance with the exacting Rail Operational Standards. The system includes an on-board Javelin touch-screen terminal with a Zebra fixed printer, Symbol handheld units linked to Zebra® mobile Cameo 2 printers and smart media readers.

So how does the innovative solution work?

Each train is stocked and its manifest loaded on smart media. Retail transactions are logged both on the fixed units in the catering area and, on certain routes, through the trolley service via mobile units, which are paid for by credit card or other means whilst the customer conveniently remains seated. Virgin Trains has chosen not to use radio frequency communication, so once the journey terminates, data – on mobile data cards - is taken off the train and into the Service Centre and fed to Rail Gourmet and the supply chain for replenishment.

System tested on a pilot train

TOREX Retail's Virgin Trains Interactive Retail Information System (VT IRIS) proved its 'On Train' capabilities on a Cross Country pilot train between October and December 2002. An actual passenger Voyager train, it visited numerous stations / Rail Gourmet Service Centres, including Birmingham, Brighton, Reading and Liverpool.



Solution Technology

TOREX Retail's Virgin Trains Interactive Retail Information System (VT IRIS)

Zebra® 28-series desktop printers

Javelin touch-screen terminal

Zebra® Cameo 2 mobile printers

smart media readers

Symbol® 2837 handheld units



Fundamental change

VT IRIS combines two IT networks – Virgin Trains' and Rail Gourmet's, providing a seamless interchange of data within the supply chain. This is a European first for the rail industry, and represents a fundamental change in the way both Virgin Trains and Rail Gourmet operate.

Benefits of TOREX Retail's VT IRIS include:

Virgin Trains can now monitor 'On Train' catering performance, enabling them to tailor product to customer by journey and time of day

enables cost reductions through management of stock flows

enhances customer service presenting a professional image

provides real time replenishment prompts supporting enhanced product availability for the customer

integrates with a telesales operation providing a single point of contact for product replenishment requests which are sent directly to Rail Gourmet using VT IRIS

reduces the need for manual completion of paperwork, allowing the shop to stay open longer

electronic transfer of data means less paperwork making data more timely and accurate

provides VT with management information to help make business decisions.

Effectiveness

Implementation of TOREX Retail's VT IRIS will be phased by location and train route, starting with the Cross Country network and moving on to the West Coast network. This staggered approach will provide time for Virgin Trains to assess effectiveness of the training programme, processes and initial information provision. The contract emphatically demonstrates TOREX Retail's ability to work in strategic partnership with its clients and their supply chain, in this case Virgin Trains and Rail Gourmet.

“... a European first for the rail industry...”

Torex Retail's on-board catering management system uses Zebra fixed and mobile printers for issuing receipts.

