Action Performance, the Official Trackside Merchandiser of NASCAR, Speeds Point of Sale Transactions Using A High Performance D-Link Business Class Wireless Solution

Challenge
Action Performance Companies, Inc. is the leader in the design, marketing, promotion and distribution of licensed motor sports merchandise and the official licensee for NASCAR collectibles. Action Performance sells licensed merchandise for 38 NASCAR, Busch, and Winston Cup races and 60 percent of the sports top drivers. The company markets and distributes its unique products through a variety of channels. One vital distribution channel is its mobile fleet of 33 tractor-trailer rigs that are set up trackside at every NASCAR event each week. Each trailer is transformed into a retail store on wheels, with products branded exclusively to one team or driver.

The trackside mobile stores are a popular destination for fans on race day with thousands attempting to purchase souvenirs and memorabilia within the three hour window available before the race. The stores are literally stuffed with lines of customers looking to make purchases. To boost productivity and profits Action Performance needed to maximize that time and conduct as many transactions as possible within that three-hour window. As a result, transaction time was critical.

Initially, Action Performance had been using cell phones to transmit credit card information during transactions. Credit transactions took a minimum of three minutes to complete each sale. As a result, customers became tired of waiting in long lines and sales were lost.

The company also had a challenge in doing inventory management. Since demand for hot products often varied, the company was unsure which products would sell well. Hot products would sell out and inventory could not be replenished before the next race in the next city. “In an industry where demand for products can vary by city or season, we did not have a solid inventory management system in place,” commented John Bickford, vice president, Action Performance, Inc. “In this fast-paced business, products and sponsors change every year. Before drastic changes were implemented, we knew a product was a hit if we were out of it when consumers were lined up with money in their hands to purchase it.”

Solution
Action Performance decided to solicit the technical expertise of POSitive Technology, Inc., a reputable Maryland-based Point of Sale (POS) systems integrator to create a fast, secure method for conducting sales transactions and develop a more robust inventory management system. The POSitive team implemented a POS software application facilitated by touch screens and a new bar coding system for all merchandise.

Another important component to the overall solution was the network connectivity. Action Performance needed a more effective way to process credit cards and report real time inventory updates. POSitive Technology designed a wireless LAN solution and ultimately chose D-Link’s DWL-2700AP Outdoor Wireless Access Point.

Using the Point-to-Multipoint operational mode of the DWL-2700AP, POSitive Technology was able to...
implement a hub and spoke bridging model to build a secure high performance 802.11g wireless local area network backbone between the trailers. Each trailer was equipped with a D-Link DWL-2700AP to give it access to the secure wireless network. The wireless network enabled communications to a satellite uplink that was installed in one of the trailers to provide Internet access. “The D-Link wireless equipment provided the key network infrastructure for the total onsite solution we were able to deliver to our customer. The performance and reliability of the D-Link equipment contributed to a very successful deployment for Action Performance,” explained Mike Nicholson, Chief Operating Officer for POSitive Technology.

Conclusion
After installing the D-Link Business Class Wireless Access Points, Action Performance had the infrastructure to effectively run their POS systems. The D-Link infrastructure helped to speed up credit card processing time significantly by reducing the three-minute credit card transaction period to a mere six seconds. With live credit card transactions taking place, the credit card losses were significantly reduced. The decrease in wait time improved customer satisfaction and allowed Action Performance to accelerate the transaction rate, increasing revenue and profitability. In addition, the D-Link wireless network connectivity enabled the company to gain access to far more accurate inventory tracking, shipping and receiving records. Action Performance was able to keep accurate reports of operations by keeping stock levels from every driver’s trailer maintained separately. The up to date inventory information allowed for replenishments of hot products from the warehouse or vendor to be available and waiting at the next stop.

Since the D-Link DWL-2700APs were so easy to set up and take down as the trailers traveled from race to race and the POS system was so very user friendly, Action Performance team members were able to conduct online transactions through a secure wireless connection with very little additional training. The barcodes and touch screens reduced the actual training time to less than five minutes.

This led to a significant increase in satisfaction among both permanent staff and temporary clerks hired in each city. Those using the new system commented that selling merchandise at NASCAR events has taken on more of a fun, carnival-like atmosphere.

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-Mike Nicholson
Chief Operating Officer
POSitive Technology

Crowds scurry during the three hour selling window to find souvenirs featuring their favorite driver.

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