

# SYSTIMAX®

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## SOLUTIONS

## CROSSMARK® Selects SYSTIMAX® Solutions to Enhance the Flow of Information to Retail Clients

### SYSTIMAX® Structured Connectivity Solutions (SCS) give the fast information flow essential in business services to the consumer packaged goods industry

CROSSMARK® has a 100-year track record of helping Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) Manufacturers take their products to market. Today, it has 10,000 employees focused on providing integrated sales, marketing and merchandising services for manufacturers selling in the supermarket, drug, and convenience trade channels.

Part of CROSSMARK's phenomenal success can be attributed to the flow-rate of mission critical information. CROSSMARK, one of the first to see technology as a competitive advantage, uses a host of platforms to deploy the right resources, to the right stores, at the right time. So when the company began designing the datacenter for its new 150,000 square foot corporate headquarters in Plano, Texas, infrastructure was a top priority.

"Our business is to manage the way products move across thousands of retail shelves throughout USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand - and to act fast when there are opportunities to do this better," said Charlie Orndorff, CROSSMARK Vice President of Infrastructure Services. "So, when we chose voice and data network infrastructure for the new building, it had to be the best. Only the fastest possible electronic feedback from the field will give HQ teams the high-quality information they need to maximize sales of clients' products."



#### Speed Is Everything, Even Cabling

Charlie Orndorff and his technical team were determined to build their LANs on the strongest foundations. Eight months before systems decisions had to be made, they began to study the cabling alternatives and evaluate solutions their clients had chosen. It was soon clear that companies that had invested in higher performance cabling had achieved greater consistency and success in their operations.

"The differences between top-of-the-range cabling alternatives may seem small, but having the ultimate network performance gives an important competitive advantage," he said. "Systems that respond immediately let our people work faster to improve product performance. And, as we provide the field force and back office with more powerful software tools in the future, we can be sure our LAN cabling will not restrict the rising information flow."

**SYSTIMAX® Structured Connectivity Solutions**

To find the best cabling, CROSSMARK asked four of the world's leading cabling suppliers to provide performance data on their top-line products. This information was then verified and compared by CROSSMARK and its technology consultants, TechKnowledge Consulting, also based in Plano. The combined team looked very carefully at the test data and the guarantees that backed up each supplier's claims.

"There were some important differences between suppliers," said Charlie Orndorff. "All of them committed to meeting the latest cabling standards, but we wanted to know how far beyond the standard the suppliers would go. For us, extra network throughput means faster speed to shelf. So we needed to know exactly how much speed our cabling could give us because that has implications for long-term advantages we may have over our competitors.

After conducting detailed comparisons and investigations, SYSTIMAX Solutions™ emerged as the leader. SYSTIMAX GigaSPEED® XL Solutions gave twice as much headroom above the Category 6 copper cabling standard as the nearest alternative."

### Consistently Better

Unlike competing products, the SYSTIMAX cable and connectors are designed to work together from the start - this results in greater capacity and consistency. State-of-the-art design and testing techniques developed at SYSTIMAX Labs also mean that SYSTIMAX SCS are always produced to the same high specifications. CROSSMARK decided on the SYSTIMAX GigaSPEED XL7 copper cabling for work areas currently serving 470 people. For ultimate performance in the datacenter it chose the GigaSPEED XL8 solution. SYSTIMAX LazrSPEED® multimode fiber, with 10 Gb/s throughput, is also used in the datacenter backbones and risers linking with communication hubs located throughout the facility.

SYSTIMAX BusinessPartner, Electra Link of Dallas, Texas, was chosen to install the cabling. During the project they connected 925 triple GigaSPEED XL 7 outlets in work areas and 384 GigaSPEED XL8 tie cables in the datacenter. A total of nearly 125 miles of GigaSPEED XL cable was used, connected via SYSTIMAX 1100 series, RJ45-type patching hardware.

“CROSSMARK’s business success is built on fast movement of information to the right people; with SYSTIMAX cabling in its new head office, it can now do this even faster.”

*Mr Peter Karlsson, Senior VP, Sales, SYSTIMAX Solutions.*

Six hundred strands of the 50 micron LazrSPEED fiber are used in the datacenter and 120 strands in the network backbone. All fiber connections are terminated with the compact, low-loss SYSTIMAX LC connectors. Tests after installation showed that worst case losses in these LazrSPEED channels are 0.4 dB over 300 meters, and over 200 meters they are as low as 0.1 dB.

During the project, SYSTIMAX distributor, Anixter, delivered cabling to the site as required by the building's fit out schedule. Anixter's services also included testing each batch of cable to ensure it still performed as well as when it left the factory. Throughout the project, every box of cable delivered either met or exceeded the manufacturer's specifications.

At the site, a team of up to 15, including project managers, worked on the installation. All key team members were certified to install SYSTIMAX SCS; therefore, when the project was completed in August 2003, the system received the industry-leading SYSTIMAX 20-year guarantees and application assurances.

### Ready for Advanced Tools

When it began building its new HQ, CROSSMARK already had sophisticated Field Force Automation Tools using laptop PCs and personal digital assistants (PDAs). This first generation software for sales tracking, surveys and daily status reporting is now being replaced by a new generation. Using wireless links to the corporate network, this makes it easy for field workers to synchronize their information with back office systems several times a day.

The quality of its communications allows CROSSMARK field staff to become more productive and less reliant on visits to regional offices. Since they can use their PDAs or the browser on a PC to

link to the corporate network via the Internet, they can share information with HQ staff while on the road or at home.

As field force tools become more powerful, information flow in company LANs is growing rapidly. Third and fourth generation tools, now being built on Microsoft platforms including the .NET framework, will link Point of Sales systems with supply chain management in real-time. When these are introduced, there will be dramatic increases in network traffic.

"Within a few years, retailers will move from bar code labeling to tags read by radio scanners, so information flow from the point of sale will be much faster," said Charlie Orndorff "When this happens, any organization in the supply chain that can't handle a quantum increase in network traffic will soon be in trouble. At CROSSMARK we already have the infrastructure to process information and pass it to our field force and clients faster than foreseeable need."

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### **Best Use of Resources**

With the tools it has developed, CROSSMARK manages its field force more effectively. Managers always know where representatives are and can quickly direct them to where they are most needed. For instance, as soon as scan data shows a product is not performing well in a particular store or chain, the nearest representatives can be directed to those outlets. They can then find and cure the problem and report back the cause and solution immediately - its retail service in real time.

This intensity of communication across wide area networks demands high performance LAN cabling at the new HQ. This is the core of communications that reach across Australia and New Zealand as well as the USA and Canada. As a result, any restriction in the LANs will prevent the company from maximizing its worldwide resources.

In addition to sales and field force management information, the LANs also handle a wide variety of rich media applications. These include on-line training and video conferencing with branch offices. Plans to upgrade these systems and introduce Voice over IP throughout the organization can now move ahead, confident that all the cabling capacity needed at head office is already in place.

Commenting on the project, Peter Karlsson, Senior VP, Sales, SYSTIMAX Solutions, said:

"CROSSMARK has a clear vision of how it will improve its services and win new business... and high performance LANs are a key component of that vision. The company's business success is built on fast movement of information to the right people; with SYSTIMAX cabling in its new head office, it can now do this even faster."