

Big Y supermarket chain uses wireless scales
to give customers better service
and reduce maintenance costs

FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE FUTURE

The challenge

Big Y Foods, Inc., an independent chain of 46 supermarkets in the Northeast, has a popular deli department. Customers queue up to take home private label and Certified Angus products and other fresh meats and cheeses. The chain prides itself on service, but deli associates were forced to turn their backs on customers to slice and weigh product to fill orders, and lines could become long during peak hours. Another problem involved broken scale communications cables. The maintenance department had to find where the break was and repair it, which can be a time-consuming task.

The solution

Lloyd Lords, equipment buyer and Bill Classen, deli sales manager for Big Y Foods, Inc., found a solution that not only solved their problems of long lines in the deli, but gave managers more flexibility with scale systems throughout the store. Hobart's

Quantum wireless scales combined with the Deli Buddy™ travelling scale/slicer shelf system allows deli employees to maintain face-to-face contact with customers.

"We never want our deli associates to turn their backs on our customers," Lords says. Before reconfiguring the deli, associates would have to turn around to slice product, and often couldn't hear customers if they requested more or less product or thicker slices. With scales and slicers mounted on the Deli Buddy, associates can face the customers while they complete an order. This also allows the customers to see their orders being filled, and enhances their confidence that they will get the correct product and amount. Since the Hobart scales are wireless, the only cable needed is for power.

"The customers enjoy face-to-face contact and shorter lines," Lords says.

Big Y associates also appreciate the change. "We've taken some of

the frustration out of their day," Lords says. "Lines are shorter, and they can take care of the customer quickly and effectively."

Big Y plans to use wireless scales in every department in each of its new stores and major remodels. "We've just purchased five stores' worth of scales, all wireless, for every department," Lords says. The wireless system also allows Big Y to be more flexible with the store layout. For example, if the store wants to offer Pannini sandwiches as a lunch or dinner meal solutions special, the scale can be plugged in wherever the sandwiches are being offered so associates can weigh and label the packages for speedy checkout. When it's time to remodel or rearrange a department, the scales can go anywhere there is an electrical outlet. More scales can be added at busier times of the year or as sales grow. Moving to wireless scales has also reduced the workload of the maintenance department. "The communication wires became a work



order problem," Lords says, adding that scale-related calls to the maintenance department have gone down with the new equipment.

Hobart's Quantum scales run on a wireless TCP/IP system. The system works with an antenna attached to the store's main computer and wireless PC card in each scale in the department, according to Rob Weisz, manager, scale communications for Hobart Corporation. With this system in place, scales can communicate with the scale management system

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and other scales without wires. This system uses Telxon and Symbol wireless technology, which is already in place at many stores for wireless scanning. By tapping into these existing wireless applications, the retailer doesn't incur additional expenses when switching to the wireless system. In addition, Hobart's system allows batch file processing, which means the scales only need to communicate with the ISP when downloads from host are to be sent. ❏

For more information about Big Y, visit their Web site at www.bigy.com. For more information about Hobart Quantum wireless scales, visit www.hobartcorp.com, call 1-800-960-1190 or circle 101 on the reader response card in this magazine.