



Case Study

AIS Ltd
Unit 46-49, Canal Walk,
Park West Industrial Park,
Nangor Road
Dublin 12

Automation of sort-plans at An Post with ESL solution results in huge efficiencies.

An Post, the state-owned provider of postal services in the Republic of Ireland, recently chose AIS to source and install a new ESL (Electronic Shelf Labels) solution in their 50,000 square metre world-class logistics facility in Clondalkin, Dublin 12. It is here, that approx. 100,000 packets are sorted daily for 144 regional sites, involving up to 3 sort plans a day.



The Challenge:

AIS were contacted by Senior Automation Engineer with An Post, Alan Hayes. Having previously worked with AIS on other projects, Alan knew that the AIS Engineering team were knowledgeable and reliable.

He explained that they wanted to resolve an issue where fixed signage was used to mark out the sort locations for the (sorting) machine e.g. Dublin 1,2,3,4,5,6 etc. Depending on the time of day, sort locations on the machine would change to meet dispatch requirements.

When there was a request to make a change, there would sometimes be a delay in getting the new signage printed which led to confusion. It was a very manual process which led to time lost between sort plans, risk of parcels being sorted incorrectly, and time spent changing signs/labels, etc.

The Solution:

Following a meeting between AIS and Alan and his colleagues at An Post, the Opticon ESL (Electronic Shelf Labels) solution was recommended due to its flexibility and centralised control system. 144 shelf edge screens are connected to three ESL base stations.

The Opticon ESL solution is a series of wireless e-ink displays that are updated in real time by a feed from any ERP or WMS software. These displays are an ideal replacement for signs or





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labels that require regular changing, which can often create a bottleneck in an otherwise highly efficient process.



With a range of different sizes available, Alan and his team opted for 7.5" displays, and utilised the black, white and red pixels to create attention grabbing templates. This meant that the ESL solution has increased productivity within the sorting room, while eliminating printing costs and allowing team members to be re-deployed on more valuable tasks.

This solution further matched An Post's requirements as Opticon have a reputation for reliability, with all ESL hardware backed by a 24-month manufacturer's guarantee. This was essential to a state-owned organisation like An Post.

Before deployment, AIS facilitated training for An Post on template creation and set up of this flexible solution, which empowered An Post to be able to amend or create new templates in the future, if new requirements were to arise.

With the new e-ink signs, An Post can now make location changes instantly and the very experienced An Post Engineering division have developed a customised software solution that sits in between the Opticon software and the machine software, that addresses the specific needs of An Post. When the sort-plan is changed the (sorting) machine software prompts this customised software to trigger the update in the Opticon software, leading to updated displays within seconds throughout the sorting room.

The Result:

The task of manually updating location signs has been eliminated, allowing staff to be re-deployed on more valuable tasks throughout the organisation at the heart of Ireland's postal system.

When changes are requested now, the team at An Post simply have to update a database file and changes are instantaneous. Overall, the system now runs much more efficiently with limited downtime when sort-plans are switched. There is also a marked reduction in miss-sorts and the new system is clearer and more accurate for staff.

About AIS

We supply complete solutions for Automatic Labelling, Machine Vision, Barcode Scanning, Barcode Verification, Label Printing and Ink-jet Coding to a number of industries including life sciences, food and beverage, manufacturing and logistics, throughout Ireland and abroad. Established in 1998, we are a 100% Irish owned company with divisions in Spain and the Netherlands. For more information see www.aisltd.ie.