

CASE STUDY | New POS and label printers at Coop Switzerland. Performance makes the difference



In 2011, Coop Switzerland started to implement a new POS solution, composed of software, hardware and peripherals. To increase their productivity, the largest Swiss retail group decided to rely on the high-performance POS and label printers from Citizen.

Coop is close to the people. 99 per cent of the Swiss population can reach a Coop store within ten minutes or less. With some **820 supermarkets**, Coop has the tightest store network in Switzerland. Coop operates supermarkets, mega stores, department stores and building supplies stores all over the country. Furniture stores, perfumeries, watch and jewellery shops and pharmacies are also part of the portfolio.

Coop started the **modernization** of its IT landscape with the implementation of a completely new POS

solution in **2011** that should equip all the sales channels with a scalable and powerful end-to-end system. New POS hardware from IBM and new POS software from GK Software were the two major components of this project.

New POS and label printers also needed to be installed, since the existing printers were error-prone, and spare parts for them were more and more difficult to be found. After a selection process, Coop decided to buy printers from Citizen. To date, the company installed **7,000 POS printers CT-S801** and **1,700 label printers CL-S621** for shelf labelling. More installations are planned in the business units Building + Hobby, Perfumery and Department Stores for **2012**, and in the restaurants for **2013**.

Printer performance thoroughly tested

Coop took their time, more than two years in total, to evaluate the software and hardware vendors. The printers were also subject to strict performance and stress tests. "In order for us to find the appropriate printer, we put the models of several vendors to intensive laboratory tests", explains **Beat Pfister**. "We conducted several tests to check the printers' error rate, quality and stability and, of course, their heat development. Speed was an important selection criterion, because time is of the essence at the point of sale where customers expect to be served quickly."

Ease of use saves time at the point of sale

With a printing speed of **300 mm per second**, Citizen's POS printer CT-S801 reached top grades during these performance tests. "The Citizen printers deliver high speed, and they are very stable", says **Beat Pfister**.

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An efficient IT infrastructure is a prerequisite to successfully manage an organization this size. Coop's POS environment, however, was far too heterogeneous and outdated to meet the company's current requirements.

*"All the POS systems we used were individual solutions", says **Beat Pfister**, Manager IT Development, Coop Switzerland. "Therefore, any development caused a lot of effort. As the software architecture was out of date, we could not even connect new peripherals via USB interfaces."*

Competent implementation, quick driver adaptation

The printers were delivered by **Primelco System Device AG**, Citizen's POS hardware distributor in Switzerland, who supported Coop proactively during the entire project phase. Once the printers were delivered, Coop managed the staging and roll-out of the printers internally. The roll-out included all 7,000 POS printers CT-S801 and 1,700 CL-S621 devices for shelf labelling. It began at the beginning of 2010 after a successful pilot installation. By the end of 2011, all **820 stores** were equipped with the new printers.



One critical success factor for the implementation was the connection of the printers via a **Java-POS interface**, together with the adaptation of the Java-POS drivers. The IBM hardware is controlled via a Powered USB interface. The printer does not need its own power supply, just a plug connector. The connection is based on an open standard. "All parties involved worked very well together, which made it possible to develop the Java drivers very quickly. The driver adaptation was a brilliant performance, because it did not take more than just two months", says **Rolf Thomann**, Key Account Manager at Primelco.

In this project, Citizen could once again prove its special expertise: "One of the key decision criteria for Coop was Citizen's capacity to make the driver adaptation in a quick, uncomplicated and flexible manner", says **Rolf Thomann**. "In this project, there were a lot of adaptations to be done which would have taken much longer with other vendors."

Efficient label printing – centralized and synchronized with the cashier price

Label printing also needed a new solution: The installed printers had reached the limit of their performance, and they caused many errors. "Every store was managed individually, so that the same logic existed a thousand times – and had to be changed a thousand times whenever there was a system update", explains Coop expert Beat Pfister.

As the label printing was fully integrated into the existing POS system, Coop decided to find a centralized label printing solution. A major requirement consisted in the need to achieve maximum consistence between the cashier price and the label price. In 2009, Coop had already gathered some experience with Citizen's label printers in their **Lumimart** light stores and in their **Toptip** furniture stores, and they decided to continue to work with Citizen. In cooperation with software vendor **GK Software**, the robust **CL-S621 printers** with metal print head were implemented as the new solution for label printing.

The advantages of a centralized configuration and error handling became quickly noticeable: transparent processes and a clearly structured management. New requirements can be put into practice easily now. Flexible guidelines for the creation of layouts, print relevance and the support of different formats and media enhance the individual possibilities of the application.

Robust and powerful even at intensive use

The functionality of the label printer proves its usefulness in the daily use. The printing time can be selected flexibly, and a synchronous sending of the prices to printer and cashier allows a centralized monitoring across all stores.

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"When it comes to shelf labelling, the new solution offers major advantages, because it secures high consistency of the shelf prices and the prices in the system. This means that the software needs to send the correct data to the printer – and this is exactly what happens here,"

*says **Román Aresté**, Sales Manager at Citizen Systems Europe.*



“In order to reliably meet the high requirements of shelf labelling, a label printer must be particularly robust. Our printers have a solid metal printing head and an integrated power supply. Like this, we can print large label quantities quickly and securely”, explains **Román Aresté**. “In everyday use, heat dissipation is secured even with very large print jobs, so that our printers do not need cooling pauses. This is why our desktop printers are implemented at the largest Swiss retailer.”

Access to the systems is now possible from every store PC. Thanks to the centralization and the virtualization of the processes – several stores run on one virtual server – new requirements can now be met easier and cheaper. The new POS solution has brought Coop major productivity increases: Due to the open software architecture, innovations and technological developments can easily be integrated. And there is even more to it: The new hardware provides for higher reliability and performance.

“The roll-out of this project with its more than 7,000 POS systems could only be secured because of the high quality of the hardware and software components”, concludes Beat Pfister. “I would recommend Citizen.”

Featuring printers:

CITIZEN CT-S801



The ideal printer for retail:

- fastest in its class (300mm/s),
- easy operation and maintenance,
- maximum uptime,
- easy to adapt in retail environment.

CITIZEN CL-S621



The ideal desktop industrial label printer:

- big capacity in a small size cover,
- reliable and durable,
- ideal for shelf and box labels,
- fast and quiet,
- easy to maintain.

About Citizen Systems Europe

Citizen Systems Europe operates from London, UK and Esslingen, Germany covering Europe, Middle East and Africa. Citizen offers a broad range of thermal label & barcode printers, portable and dot matrix printers, mini and POS printers. Via a network of specialized partners, these are sold into markets as diverse as industrial, retail, healthcare and mobile applications.

Citizen Systems Europe is a wholly owned subsidiary of Citizen Systems Japan and part of the Citizen Watch Company of Japan. The globally operating group produces its world-famous eco drive watches and mini printers, industrial print systems and machine tools, crystal oscillators, LEDs and other electronic components.

About COOP Switzerland

Coop is the largest retail company in Switzerland. Close to the customers and organized in five sales region, Coop operates more than 1,900 stores with some 54,000 employees. Coop has approximately 2.7 million members and a yearly turnover of some 22 billion euro. The company offers the largest choice of brands in the Swiss retail market, and is the market leader in the domain of eco and fair-trade products.

www.coop.ch

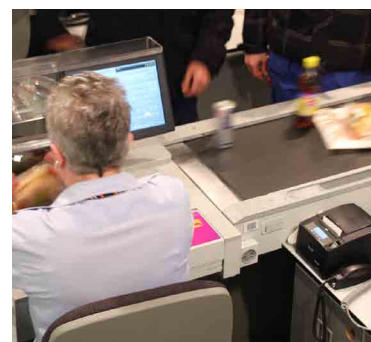
About Primelco System Device AG

Primelco System Device AG is a leading, professionally competent company operating in the fields of POS solutions and mobile data entry, specializing in retail, commerce, logistics, and the restaurant and hotel industries. Primelco offers integrated solutions from a single source, precisely adapted to meet the customers' needs and requirements.

www.primelco.ch

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