



## CROSSING THE FINISH LINE

How one manufacturer sailed  
into better inventory management

McLaughlin Boat Works is one of the largest manufacturers of the world-renowned Optimist racing sailboat for children. McLaughlin supplies boats for over 30 prestigious events across the globe, which include 20 smaller regattas in Bermuda, the Bahamas and both coasts in the U.S. Each year as many as 200 boats are needed for the regattas

and national competitions; competitors use the boats, then return them after the race. Boats are then repaired and prepped before shipping them off to the next race. With some of the championships lasting as long as 2 weeks, the boats are taken to task with exposure to sea air, salty water and multiple users.

Built in Chattanooga, TN, McLaughlin is the most technologically advanced Optimist in the world, and undefeated in world championship competitions.

## TELLTALE SIGNS

As their business grew, inventory management became more challenging.

- **Multiple inventory locations** and parts manufactured overseas made it difficult to manage with confidence, especially since their WMS could show quantities but not locations.
- **Locating parts** was a challenge, with workers checking as many as five locations before finding parts like mast steps, for example. If they ran out of mast steps (stored in 40-foot containers), they could be holding up the entire manufacturing process.
- **Using spreadsheets**, parts requirements were loaded for each event. Some events needed as many as 1000 components; and with events scheduled back-to-back, parts quantities had to be correct so boats are ready at the start of each race.

## WHO IS McLAUGHLIN BOAT WORKS?

- Only builder of the Optimist sailboat in the USA
- Importer and distributor of junior sailboat marine hardware
- Operator of a worldwide network of dealers
- Distributor of parts through Optiparts, a sister company, based in Holland



## ALL ABOARD!

The team at Barcom met with McLaughlin, touring the facility and seeing how their existing process worked. They came up with a plan to establish locations so they would confidently know where parts were stored to move material into active inventory and through production. "Because of the critical nature of our business, we needed to be able to look at our inventory in order to anticipate back orders and re-stocking needs before we ran out of material," said Spencer Wiberley, Vice President of McLaughlin Boat Works.

Barcom created a custom application in transACTION to enable a check-in / check-out process. In combination with the Honeywell CK75 Handheld Mobile Computers, they use the Zebra GX420 Desktop Barcode Label Printers and Honeywell PM43 Industrial Barcode Label Printers to print barcode labels that are scanned to track raw materials and finished goods. At events, they use transACTION on a rugged tablet for check-in and maintenance applications. "This had to be a robust solution," said Wiberley. "We're talking about ocean containers in the middle of a Caribbean summer with saltwater, UV rays and spotty connectivity," he added. "The field is tough, the requirements are extreme, but Barcom made it a whole lot easier for us."

### transACTION for Inventory Management

- Establishes a way to manage parts in the warehouse
- Enables greater visibility for storage of raw materials
- Provides an efficient process for parts consumption through production



## READY TO SAIL THROUGH A MORE EFFICIENT INVENTORY MANAGEMENT PROCESS?

Contact Barcom today for a free consultation and start winning that race to the finish line.

## AT THE HELM

Barcom's solution is significant for McLaughlin because many parts are purchased from overseas, which often have a 30-day lead time. "It's like running out of studs to build a house. Without most steps, production would come to a halt. Air freight is an option, but a very expensive one because they're made of stainless steel," said Wiberley.

### For McLaughlin, the results and ROI are clear:

- **Relying on the Numbers.** Being confident about what's in the warehouse has been the biggest change for them.
- **Barcoding Process.** Barcoding allows them to see what's in the warehouse and what they need.
- **Accuracy.** They are currently around 95% accuracy, which was their goal at the start of the project.
- **Efficiency.** Event prep is less stressful. Today they can track what boats are at the event, who has which boat, when it was returned and the condition. This kind of visibility lets them go on to the next event knowing exactly what needs to be done.

## GAME CHANGER

For McLaughlin, transACTION and mobile devices allow them to pursue a business model of manufacturing and distribution without all the paperwork, productivity gaps and unexpected expenses. Other areas of improvement include:

- **Reporting.** It used to take two weeks to pull average sales volumes and production requirements. Today it's complete in about 5 minutes.
- **Operating Efficiency.** End-of-year cycle counting and utilization of property is far more efficient. They no longer allocate shelf space that will just end up being empty.

"When we sat down with Barcom and told them what we wanted to do they said, 'We can make this work' – and they did," said Wiberley. "Today we can move forward and grow; internal communications are much smoother as well, which has really strengthened our work environment."