

# CASE STUDY

## BrucePac Stays Ahead by Automating with LXE and Quest

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Empower Your Workforce



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*— Ben Waldon  
Network Administrator/  
Project Manager at BrucePac*

### Customer Profile

For more than 60 years, many of America's top food companies have relied on BrucePac Meat Product Designers for their cooked protein needs. Food distribution companies sell BrucePac's poultry, beef and pork products for restaurant meals, and food manufacturers incorporate the meats into frozen foods. Delivering rapid response in product development, customizable products with lower minimums, and consistent quality with competitive pricing are some of the hallmarks of the Silverton, Oregon, company. To ensure the quality and safety of its meat products, BrucePac's two plants undergo continuous USDA inspection, maintain in-house microbiological and chemical labs, and operate under HACCP and Total Quality Assurance principles.

BrucePac's continuous improvement approach to food safety and security drove the company's interest in enhancing and

refining paper-based food traceability processes. "We wanted to account specifically for what lines a product was cooked on and where it was stored," says Ben Waldon, Network Administrator/Project Manager at BrucePac. "If there is a recall, you have to have the information *now*. Before, we had the information, but we needed to tighten it up." Food traceability is the focus of increased regulatory attention, and BrucePac wanted to get out ahead of future requirements. Well-honed traceability capabilities are also in demand among customers.

BrucePac was already using Microsoft Dynamics enterprise resource planning (ERP) software for its business and accounting functions. Management decided to tap Dynamics' inventory management and data collection capabilities to label and track its meat products as they moved through BrucePac's plants.

**CUSTOMER**  
BrucePac

**SOLUTION**  
MX7CS

**RESULTS**  
Increased loading / order accuracy



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As a part of the data collection solution, BrucePac needed mobile computers for scanning bar coded cartons and pallets, and approached several solution providers to help them select the right model.

One of these was Quest Solution, a leading integrator of mobile data collection systems headquartered in Eugene, Oregon. Quest has substantial experience in the food industry and its location would enable local support.

## Software and Support

**Remote Desktop Client Support**—“That was important for our IT department,” says Waldon. “We didn’t want to add additional components by using middleware. It was important that we be fully supported by our software vendor,” rather than a separate developer for the middleware.

**Lock-Out**—BrucePac wanted a simple utility to ensure the mobile computers would be used only for the Dynamics application, not games or other time-wasters.

**Food Business Credibility**—“We wanted a product intended for a business like ours,” says Waldon. “We talked to references in the food industry, which was valuable.” In the low-margin food business, solutions must be extremely effective and a good value.

## Hardware

**Rugged and Cold-Resistant**—BrucePac’s plants are chilled and humid, with concrete floors throughout the facility. “People will drop these to concrete. They’ll drop them from forklifts to concrete,” Waldon says. It was essential that the units continue to operate in those conditions.

**Ten-key Numeric Keypad**—BrucePac workers use gloves to guard against the chilled temperatures. Large buttons are essential to make sure the user is hitting the intended input.

**Pistol Grip**—An easy to use pistol grip was the popular choice among workers who tested demo equipment, even those using forklifts.

## Responsiveness Wins

Another factor was not on BrucePac’s initial list – but turned out to be highly valuable: rapid delivery of demo equipment. Quest and LXE were the most responsive of the manufacturers they approached.

“I was pretty impressed with the demo process,” Waldon says. “With some other manufacturers, we got whatever they had on the shelf. Quest questioned us thoroughly on our needs and sent exactly what we needed. To us it was indicative that LXE is really on the ball, and that built a positive expectation about the support we would get.” Because of the quick delivery, BrucePac was able to test LXE MX7CS computers for several weeks and do side-by-side comparisons with other models as they arrived.

BrucePac awarded the contract to Quest and purchased LXE MX7CS, a rugged, versatile handheld computer ideal for a broad range of applications ranging from picking, to receiving, to full pallet put-aways, with a heated screen and keys to withstand humid freezer transitions without condensation. After several weeks of testing and training, the two plants went live with the MX7CS in November, 2010.

For workers who were not regular computer users, the idea of using a mobile computer was a bit intimidating, but once they had an opportunity to use them, “they were very receptive,” and adapted quickly, says Waldon. “It’s a way of life now.”

Now, as each product leaves the production line, it’s packaged and labeled with a unique bar coded ID label. That box becomes part of a larger pallet, also with its own label. A worker uses the MX7CS every time that pallet or carton moves – put-away, picking and shipping, as well as breaking down full pallets for small orders.

## Results

After just a short time using the complete system including the MX7CS, BrucePac is already seeing results:

- Any errors are detected early, rather than at shipping or upon delivery, resulting in improved order accuracy.
- Product is more likely to be packed at the precise weight ordered, since this is now more closely tracked.
- Real-time visibility into the location of individual cartons and pallets.
- A faster, more detailed traceability system at the ready in the event of a recall.
- Compliance with customer expectations for BrucePac to offer state-of-the-art capabilities.

BrucePac is anticipating even more benefits as the data collection solution takes hold and the company adds functions such as tracking materials. So far, the project “has been very positive,” Waldon says. “I’m impressed with the way Quest and LXE stepped up and understood the goals of the project, and we’ve achieved those goals.”



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