





The unachievable has been achieved, with the fastest and most accurate inline systems, installed in – industry's most prestigious manufacturers, providing real-time labelling, verification and data acquisition.

## Specialists in auto identification

Cobalt is dedicated to helping businesses of all sizes gain maximum benefit from their investment, by improving the identification and visibility of products at every stage of manufacture: from receipt, through production, into inventory and out into the supply chain.

Reliable barcode and RF identification enables the open exchange of product details, giving clear supply chain visibility, and providing transparency across corporate boundaries. Cobalt offers the expertise, equipment, education and training to identify your product, track history and plan its future, meeting all regulatory requirements as well as your business objectives.

By working differently,  
we get the very best  
result for you

The Cobalt philosophy revolves around developing a clear understanding of exactly what you need to achieve. By applying extensive experience and industry standards to site circumstances, Cobalt specify the precise system to meet the business objectives. The company's flexible approach and extensive product range then translates that specification into reality, without compromise.

“Discussing the details with Cobalt, we realised that in order for the project to be successful, we needed to consider many more aspects of the design than was first thought. The specification that was put together was a long way from what we originally anticipated... but it was one that really met our needs.”

Derek Selby, European Packaging Manager, H J Heinz Ltd.



## The world's best auto ID products

Cobalt holds strategic partnerships with some of the auto ID industry's most significant names – developers of hardware and software who are known for their reliability and effectiveness. By blending the strength of these partners with its own extensive industry experience, Cobalt can identify the most appropriate functionality for each individual installation, and protect your investment by avoiding potential problems.

Applying an in-depth knowledge of requirements, Cobalt technicians add functionality and configure settings to satisfy each customer's individual requirements. Complex communication, error correction and data exchange functions are built using advanced features and Cobalt specialist products. Well developed, simple user interfaces protect the user from the complexity of the operation, automating key functions and validating and logging manual input.

The result is a solution that delivers the best possible on-site performance and satisfies individual user preferences exactly.

## Delivering measurable results

Cobalt's approach to customer satisfaction is based on a proven combination of technical excellence and down-to-earth commercial realism. The aim is to provide customers with a maximum 12 month payback period, supported by hard performance data. Cobalt equipment is always specified to outperform the original requirements, so that customers can rely on their Cobalt solution to provide additional capacity and extended longevity.

The result is a solution that delivers the best possible on site performance and satisfies individual user preferences exactly.

“Cobalt found a way around every obstacle, ticking all our boxes and much more.”  
Anne Charlesworth, Technical Manager, Dairy Crest Ltd.



Component quality is never compromised and every specification is priced for success.

“Cobalt helped this process tremendously by anticipating our needs and making sure nothing was missed. Every new requirement was met with sensible and practical solutions, and a number of tricky problems overcome with a determination to succeed.”

Derek Selby, European Packaging Manager, H J Heinz Ltd.

“The best installation process I have ever been involved with.”

Paul Jones, Technical Support Manager, The Cheese Company Ltd.

## Technical excellence

### Quality and self-checking are standard

Cobalt's objective is to provide robust hardware solutions that offer reliable encoding, and 100% read rates. To ensure consistency, Cobalt's solutions always include self-checking and self-diagnostic disciplines. Component quality is never compromised and every specification is priced for success.

Every Cobalt labelling system features built-in operational checks and an advance warning mechanism, that prompts preventative action and replenishment of consumables well before failure occurs.

Barcode print quality is checked before labels are applied, accurate application is confirmed and barcoding is verified to industry standards. Data logging routines create an accurate audit register of labelling activity, graphically identifying any degradation in quality and issuing early warnings.

### Guaranteed installation times

Although even the best technology can throw up unexpected issues during installation, Cobalt's technical team has a proven track record in successfully overcoming these obstacles. This means installations adhere to schedule and lines keep working without disruption.

### Comprehensive training puts you in control

The company's primary aim is to help customers become self-sufficient in the use of the solutions it provides. Cobalt offers a wide range of training options – available either on site or at its own Cheshire training centre – which ensures that customer personnel can respond quickly and effectively whenever necessary. Cobalt works to make your operators and engineers fully aware of the features and facilities of your new equipment so that they come to accept responsibility for, and take pride in, the success of your Cobalt installation.

## Correct specification... leaving nothing to chance

The thorough approach to specification, which lies at the heart of the Cobalt experience, allows the company to identify specific requirements and then deliver reliable and tangible benefits.

### Solutions that start on the shop floor

The starting point for each Cobalt specification is a site visit to examine the existing operating environment and line conditions. Thorough consideration is given to all factors in the process: pack sizes, conveying conditions, line speeds, access restrictions, operator procedures, picking routes, put away procedures, re-pack methodologies, manufacturing and warehouse system data exchanges, plus numerous other criteria, including the level and status of existing upstream and downstream automation.

Detailed discussions then identify the business benefits (both essential and desirable) that your investment needs to generate – a process that may include reconciling the conflicting demands of different sectors of your business.

Attention is then turned to the solution – delivering a highly detailed specification which clearly identifies the steps necessary to realise the full benefits of the project.

Live on site trials and reference site visits enable you and your colleagues to see the proposed solution in action, and share directly in the experience of one of Cobalt's many satisfied customers.



## Migrating to RFID... Changing the way you look at auto ID systems in the future

Cobalt provides RFID labelling solutions for packs, cases and pallets, improving traceability in both the manufacturing and distribution stages of your product. Introducing new technology selectively smooths the transition to these advanced solutions.

The first stage is to evaluate the specific product, packing configuration and site conditions. Great care is taken to optimise transponder positioning and to identify environmental factors which influence read rates. Cobalt technicians map data flows and manage all filtering, collision and validation issues. Built-in correction routines ensure reliable accuracy.

The Cobalt RFID evaluation kit can be used to identify potential obstacles and benefits pre-trial, so that this critical stage can proceed with clear objectives and complete confidence.

## Competent labelling automation... expanding your capabilities

Cobalt Print and Apply solutions exceed customer requirements and provide additional capacity for future growth. Complete with Ethernet capabilities and advanced control and diagnostic tools, all solutions are delivered ready for RFID migration.

High speed, continuous operation, real-time print and apply to the front of shrink-wrap packs is a unique Cobalt speciality that frees you from the problems of turning and spacing packs prior to labelling. To ensure optimum flexibility, multiple surface labelling combinations are all available from one system, which allows the operator to single-handedly make the required changes.

Meeting all European traded unit standards, Cobalt's pallet labelling range provides economical yet high integrity solutions for labelling stationary or moving pallets. Pallet labellers are RFID enabled and include real-time condition monitoring and barcode verification, plus epcode validation with automatic reject, reprint and recode functions which combine to ensure that no unreadable label is ever applied to a pallet.

Cobalt solutions consistently deliver maximum availability and minimum downtime for all in-line applications.

Working in real-time means our systems to respond immediately to changes in requirements and enables us to register the exact time and date of each identification event.

“Together with Cobalt we updated all of our equipment and infrastructure to the latest standards and went live on time with no problems at all - No mean feat!!!”  
Dave Garratt, Technical Analyst, Nestlé Purina Petcare Ltd.

## Valid and verified... a proven identity

Cobalt's expertise also extends into full identification control and packing line management. This includes the use of extended communication techniques and camera vision technology, to collect all data on an item and match product content to batch details and pack markings.

At every stage the product properties are registered, and the date and time are logged. This process intrinsically links the product location with the pack identity and time, recording the quality and status of identification markings as each event is completed.

Cobalt's diagnostic software provides graphical on-screen intelligence to enable the operator to keep the line running.

Cobalt systems also have the unique ability to respond instantly to errors by generating warnings, as well as signals to control upstream and downstream production line activity.

## Customised mobile technology

Mobile printing and data capture systems add extra flexibility to customers' warehousing and distribution activities by reducing picking routes, validating locations, providing real-time inventory status and eradicating input errors.

To ensure complete reliability, Cobalt carries out full RF site surveys, which define the data management and interface requirements and also analyse the racking construction and positioning, to identify the optimum positioning of RF antennae.

Cobalt's range of mobile printers, both truck-mounted and hand held devices, combine local functionality with up-to-the-minute information delivered to warehouse staff via simple user interfaces. Picking and put away data is collected in real time, validated and then reliably relayed into the host management system, respecting established protocols and security policies.



## Auto ID... the way ahead

The emergence of Radio Frequency Technology for item identification delivers far greater efficiency than traditional EAN & UCC Bar Code systems. More importantly, it opens the door to many more opportunities for secure and accurate tracking operations.

Once this technology is established as an effective basic replacement for bar coding, innovative ideas will start to flow, many beginning within manufacturing, where the need to gain greater benefits is essential to offset the cost of the label transponder. Eventually radio frequency technology will also come to play a bigger role in tracking goods in transport and logistics exercises.

Imagine a pallet transponder that knows how to navigate itself through a complex system, arriving at the correct destination with 100% reliability. Or a transponder linking with a vehicle GPS and radio telecommunications system to automatically provide its exact location in real-time. The possibilities are bound only by the imagination of those who seek to exploit the opportunities which surround us.

**Tony Hunt**  
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