



Mt Ruapehu Skiers Slide Through Queues After Technology Overhaul

Skiers at Mt Ruapehu are the first in New Zealand to take advantage of a new wireless RFID scanning solution that increases customer convenience, reduces overheads and minimises ski pass fraud...

Inspecting the passes for season and life pass holders at Mt Ruapehu's two commercial ski areas is much easier and convenient for skiers, faster for the ticket checker and has significantly cut down on incidences of pass fraud, all thanks to a smart card / RFID (radio frequency identification) system supplied and supported by Mobico.

"About half of the skiers on the mountain are holders of life or season passes," says Dave Mazey, general manager of Ruapehu Alpine Lifts (RAL), the operators of both Whakapapa and Turoa ski fields. "We want to make their experience as comfortable as possible. With the combination of the RFID passes, rugged wireless scanners and our new POS (point of sale) system, pass holders don't have to take off their gloves and rummage around their pockets to show their cards. In addition, once the pass is scanned, a large, clear image of the pass holder is displayed on the handheld scanner which allows the pass checker to ensure that the skier is actually the pass holder." In the season so far, as a result of the new technology, more than 50 people have been caught trying to use a season/life pass fraudulently.

RAL owns and operates the assets of New Zealand's two leading North Island ski areas, Whakapapa and Turoa on Mt Ruapehu. During the winter ski season up to 750 staff are employed with snow-related activities. Total lift capacity for the two

areas is 15,000 skiers per hour at Whakapapa and 11,300 skiers per hour at Turoa.

The RFID solution is a quantum leap from RAL's old barcode scanning system which, in turn, was another quantum leap from the traditional method of visually inspecting passes. "We should be able to reduce the number of ticket checkers we'll need next year by around 25%," says Mazey, "a significant saving. And now that we have the system in place, we can start using the smart cards in other aspects of the ski field operation such as equipment rental, food and beverage and customer relationship management."

“

We should be able to reduce the number of ticket checkers we'll need next year by around 25%, a significant saving. And now that we have the system in place, we can start using the smart cards in other aspects of the ski field operation such as equipment rental, food and beverage and customer relationship management.

Dave Mazey, general manager

”

WORLD-CLASS TECHNOLOGY

"As part of our constant effort to optimise the experience of our customers," says Mazey, "the RAL senior management team makes it a point to visit

CASE STUDY

> Ruapehu Alpine Lifts

AT A GLANCE

Business Objective

- > Optimise the customer experience by streamlining the ski pass inspection process
- > Over time, reduce the number of ticket checkers required over time
- > Reduce the incidence of season/life ski pass fraud

Solution

- > Motorola MC9090-G Wireless Handheld RFID Scanners
- > Motorola AP5131 Access Points to support mesh wireless network
- > Siriusware access control / sales point software
- > Professional services and support from Mobico

Business Benefits

- > 25% forecast reduction in ticket checkers in ensuing ski seasons
- > Queues moving 30% faster
- > Significant reduction of fraudulent use of season / life passes
- > Provides powerful new platform for applications elsewhere within the operation

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- > Mobico, www.mobico.biz

other leading ski areas worldwide to see the latest in technology. Ski field operators in the Northern Hemisphere are beginning to use RFID smart card technology and we thought that it would enhance our appeal if we could implement a similar solution here. We had a barcode scanning solution in place that linked to our point of sale system via a wireless network, but all were in need of an upgrade. So the timing was perfect."

"Our POS system just didn't have the functionality we required nor were we getting the support we wanted," says James Fisher, IT Manager at RAL. "And the bar code readers at the lift line had surpassed their 'use by' date. Dave and the management team really liked the idea of an RFID-based system so we looked at the market to see what was available. As it turned out, Siriusware was one of the very few solutions that fulfilled our requirements. An added incentive was that Siriusware was compatible with Motorola RFID scanners. We had been using Motorola radios at the ski field for years and were impressed with their robust operations, not an insignificant fact considering our harsh environment."

Once the team at RAL had decided on Siriusware, they contacted Mobico for the provision of RFID scanners. "Matt Higgs, Corporate Account Manager at Mobico, had literally grown up on the ski field and had been in contact with us about Mobico's products and services," continues Fisher. "So we called him up to see if they could help us. His understanding of our operation and the unique environment we operate in has been a distinct advantage."

"We jumped at the opportunity to help out our friends at RAL," says Higgs. "After a few conversations to clarify their requirements, we were able to provide them with a full solution including Motorola wireless handheld RFID readers and Gen2 UHF RFID seasons pass cards. Plus we are currently in the process of upgrading their legacy wireless network with a state-of-the-art dual-band mesh



network like that used at C3. This will improve both coverage and data transfer rates. From the outset, we were very mindful of public nature and the size of the project. We worked closely with RAL, Siriusware and Motorola to ensure that when the season opened the new pass checking system would operate as expected and continue to operate in the harsh environment. We even tested solution prototypes in commercial freezers to simulate the environment to assist with the early identification of any potential issues."

PERSONAL SERVICE

"We really appreciate the personal service we've received from Mobico," notes Mazey. "When we had two scanners go down at the same time – the conditions here can wreak havoc on any type of machinery or electronic device – they immediately sent down a replacement unit, the only one in the country at the time, and sourced another from Australia. When we were running short of blank passes and the shipment from overseas was late, Matt personally picked up the cards from the airport and drove them down after hours. Plus they have been most helpful with the configuration of the Motorola scanners and have given us great advice as we've deployed the Siriusware solution elsewhere on the mountain."

RAL is just scratching the surface with their RFID initiative. "Once we have the new wireless mesh infrastructure in place," concludes Mazey, "and have more experience with Siriusware, we'll be replacing our barcode scanners with RFID throughout our operations in areas such as equipment rental and food and beverage. Of course, RFID is more expensive than barcodes, but it has so much more potential down the road. Our focus at Whakapapa and Turoa is to make the customer experience as fun, rewarding and convenient as possible and RFID, and the team from Mobico, will help us achieve that goal."