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Finding lost boxes

17 Jun 2010

Terminal operators are investing in state-of-the-art position detection systems to streamline box management, writes Patrik Wheeler

Position Detection Systems, originally based on GPS (global positioning satellite) technology, have come on leaps and bounds since their first introduction in the late 1980s.

Some of today's systems have evolved to form a modular set of core components from which various additional modules can be added to increase system functionality. This has included not only GPS and positioning and detection systems (PDS) information, but VMT (vehicle maintenance tracking) driver screens, RFID (radio frequency identification) automatic move selection, security authorisation, maintenance logging and reporting, statistics logging, equipment automation and several other features.

Over time this has allowed stable standard modules to evolve to provide a high degree of port-to-port customisation without the risk of major system changes.

International Terminal Solutions (ITS), one of the pioneers in container positioning and detection systems (PDS), having first supplied solutions as long ago as 1988, has used its experience to develop the next generation system that claims to avoid obsolescence issues allowing for future-proofed, reliable system design.

A couple of years ago, ITS launched its G-POS system. The first generation was originally installed on rubber-tired gantry cranes and provided the modular hardware base for ITS' modular functionality. However, the UK-based company has been working on a range of G-POS hardware platforms and is now able to offer the G-POS compact, and G-POS mini to allow ITS systems to be installed on any type of container handling equipment.

According to ITS' Richard Lambert, the company has been inundated with enquiries, many of which have now firmed into contracts. And this year ITS will install its full range of G-POS systems in RTGs, RMGs, straddle carriers, reachstackers, empty handlers, and IMV Trucks for several customers.

It is interesting to note that all the G-POS units use a common set of hardware components allowing full inter-changeability between the G-POS units and all the G-POS units to run all the functional modules. As such it is very easy and cost effective to upgrade any unit to add more functionality, says Mr Lambert.

For example, one particular terminal has been operating ITS's PDS systems for over 17 years. Over that time the systems have been upgraded several times, allowing the client to stay one-step-ahead without the need for system replacement.

"To ensure the systems don't get caught in the 'proprietary hardware' trap, the ITS modular hardware components have been carefully selected to allow swap compatibility with a range of commercially available platforms. This means that if a computer or communication board becomes obsolete it can be substituted for another one without modification or system replacement," says Mr Lambert.

For the terminal operator, the implementation of a container positioning system is key to keeping track of the location of containers. As one terminal operator that has developed its own in-house solution told *Port Strategy*: "The accuracy of container location, what we term as yard integrity, is extremely valuable because it allows each box to be located precisely, eliminating the time wasted finding missing boxes.



ITS has launched a range of G-POS hardware platforms that can be installed on any type of container handling equipment

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