

Ranger rolls out new cellphone barcode scanners

Music Industry contractor Ranger Computers Ltd has recently rolled out a new cellphone based data capture system for the Official UK Record Charts. The new system captures sales data from independent record retailers in real time, relaying sales of CD's directly to the UK chart system, the most comprehensive in the world.

“Physical music (mostly CD and Vinyl) sales are still a major component in music retailing throughout the world, and especially in UK” says Ranger’s managing director David Viewing. “Sales made by independent record retailers are especially important because they often reflect emerging trends in new and regional music sales that that do not show up in mass merchandise outlets until much later”.

Ranger have captured music sales in independent retail for more than 20 years using evolving technologies, starting with the first portable computers and dial-up modems. The new system replaces a previous network that used wired-in broadband to relay data captured at the point of sale. The new system, called ‘Mobar’, has a much lower cost of ownership in the retail environment because it avoids the need for any installation, wiring, or special training of staff. “All that’s needed”, says Viewing, “is a power point”.

Mobar consists of a very high performance barcode scanner and a dedicated cellphone which relays each scan immediately in real time to Ranger’s servers in the cloud, using the GSM network. The scanning process reads at a distance and requires only that the sales assistant passes the CD or other item in front of the scanner before handing it to the customer. Retailers can log into the cloud to see their sales as they happen, especially useful for independent stores with multiple outlets and for owner operated stores where the owner may away from the premises.

A major factor in Mobar’s lower operating cost is the lack of a need any data wiring in the store. This is especially important in independent stores where equipment installation is sometimes problematic and counters are frequently moved to maximise use of space. Mobar is completely automatic and will operate as soon as it is plugged in, eliminating any need for staff involvement. It will work anywhere that there is cellphone signal and for locations where this is problematic, it can use the store’s own wi-fi.

The UK Mobar installation, carried out in collaboration with UK Official Charts compiler Millward Brown International, went live with 100 retailers at the beginning of February and is already yielding better quality data than was possible with the old broadband system.



The shop at the Royal Opera House in London's Covent Garden use Mobar to report sales of music and video products to the UK's Official Charts Company.



Staff pass each music CD or DVD under the Mobar scanner, seen in centre of photo.

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