

# LAUBRASS MARSHALS NEW RESOURCES

In a business as diverse as department stores, every second matters. In order to save time and streamline processes, Marshall Field's, a division of Target Corp., wanted to automate one of its time-consuming manual processes. Tools from Laubress Inc. allowed the company to do just that.

Using Palm handheld computer technology, Laubress offers software that dramatically changed one industrial engineer's daily life. Bill Tolo, an industrial engineer with Marshall Field's and a proponent of work measurement, learned about Laubress at the IIE Annual Conference in 2001 and stayed in touch with the company's president Charles Brassard. The contact proved fruitful. Less than one year later, Marshall Field's purchased 100 Palm units and installed Laubress' work measurement software to automate its time study, work sampling, and data collection processes.

## UTILITY

When completing projects in logistics and merchandising within the store's support group, Tolo required large amounts of data. He realized the potential savings from using Palm technology to compile information. Normally confined to using intrusive stopwatch and paper methods, Tolo understood the advantages of a portable handheld computer armed with Laubress' UMT software. "It's the stopwatch of the 21<sup>st</sup> century," explained Tolo.

The Palm offered key attractions. Instead of returning to a static location to input data by hand and coerce information from the numbers, Palm computers supplied immediate on-site feedback. Measurements were then adjusted or supplemented as necessary without hours or even days of data entry separating data collection.

More importantly, engineers doing studies incurred fewer disruptions. The operators they studied were relaxed during observations, in some cases not even realizing they were being timed, which allowed engineers to gather

accurate information about operations.

With the number of simultaneous tasks for the observer reduced to one click, those assigned to gather data had more time to focus on the tasks they timed. In addition to simplifying data collection, the software allowed users to take notes about their observations with the Palm.

"You can do a study with the tool you already have, the Palm," said Tolo, "and you can get the results much quicker."

## VERSATILITY

Tolo chose the Laubress package because of its simplicity. A half-hour session provided all the necessary information to use the handheld computer and accompanying software. Tolo recruited 90 people in three locations to perform the studies he needed for one project.

"I was able to collect all that data, download it into the program, analyze the data, and get a report in a couple days," he remarked. Completion time for measurement and studies went from an average of three weeks to a matter of days.

The same tool that any employee can learn to use in a matter of minutes provided expanded capabilities for the advanced engineer. Tolo compares it to a calculator. "It's got the functionality to build on. It's simple enough to use right away but it's sophisticated enough for an experienced engineer to use."

Overall, the UMT software enhances Tolo's ability to do his job. "It changes the way I do business," he said.



**Laubress' UMT software runs on portable handheld computers for added versatility and efficiency.**

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