

# NETGEAR's wireless switch technology accelerates Futaba's workforce productivity

Futaba reduces time and costs associated with machinery downtime by implementing NETGEAR's technology

## Profile

Company: **Futaba Industrial UK Ltd**

Sector: **Automotive Components**

Solution: **1x WFS709TP ProSafe® Smart Wireless Controller**

**2x WGL102 ProSafe Light Wireless Access Points**

## Background

Futaba Industrial UK Ltd (FIUK) is a sequenced parts manufacturer for the automotive industry that processes parts throughout a 24-hour shift. The organisation employs 130 people and delivers low-cost products of the highest quality. Futaba Industrial UK Ltd is a subsidiary of Futaba Co Ltd. Formed in 1945, Futaba Co Ltd has steadily expanded beyond Japan, and now has ten plants and research establishments. There are 17 subsidiary companies in Canada, Czech Republic, China, India and the UK, including FIUK in Derby. Futaba also has 5 affiliated companies based in Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, and Indonesia. Futaba Co Ltd manufactures specialised welding machines, press tools, dies, office equipment, and interactive robots.

## PROBLEM/OBJECTIVE

FIUK is the sole supplier of sequential welded sub-assembly tools to Toyota Motor Company. Catering for its global market, it is required to build up to 1,250 cars per day. FIUK is Europe's only sequential welding supplier, and their state-of-the-art production line is highly robotised to meet the demanding requirements inherent in such a process.

As part of FIUK's drive for continuous improvement, a reduction in downtime for robot maintenance and repair was required. A vital component of this process was ensuring parts availability and minimising the number of, often very expensive, parts held in stock. Therefore, a new automated stock control system utilising handheld wireless scanners was introduced. With the scanners, FIUK employees were able to tightly control and monitor stock levels and parts utilisation, and, with analysis, match the former to the latter to optimise stock patterns in real-time.

However, the infrastructure of the factory presented another obstacle. Heavy metal walls interrupted FIUK's existing wireless connection and employees frequently lost connectivity – a further bottleneck to the organisation's productivity.

FIUK needed a reliable and consistent wireless network to successfully operate the scanners, and reduce the time and costs associated with machinery downtime.



“FIUK needed a reliable and consistent wireless network to successfully operate the scanners, and reduce the time and costs associated with machinery downtime.”

## SOLUTION

NETGEAR's Smart Wireless Switch technology was recommended to FIUK by Cantarus as a best-of-breed solution. Cantarus is a consultancy firm that offers bespoke technology solutions and value-added services. The company offered independent advice to FIUK regarding the best solution, before working with NETGEAR to install the technology and offer post-implementation support.

FIUK installed NETGEAR's WFS709TP ProSafe® Smart Wireless Controller and two WGL102 ProSafe Light Wireless Access Points for a reliable wireless network that had a strong signal 24 hours a day.

Following the implementation of NETGEAR's technology, FIUK benefited from a seamless wireless network across the entire factory floor. NETGEAR's WFS709TP ProSafe Smart Wireless Controller manages the two WGL102 ProSafe Light Wireless Access Points, which allows FIUK to intelligently monitor and control its wireless infrastructure with in-built load balancing and bandwidth utilisation technology.

NETGEAR's wireless technology provided workers with access to the network, through which they could determine stock levels of specific components by scanning relevant barcodes. Once scanned, the item would immediately be deducted from the numbers on FIUK's database, and as levels became low the system would alert workers that new parts needed to be ordered. By ensuring stock was always available, this helped minimise the robots' downtime and avoid costly stoppages and breakdowns.

By providing FIUK's employees with a wireless network that was both reliable and continuous, NETGEAR enabled increased productivity across the workforce. The increased efficiency and elimination of unnecessary costs provided the company with a more successful production line, ensuring cars were produced at a timelier, more consistent rate.

“By providing FIUK's employees with a wireless network that was both reliable and continuous, NETGEAR enabled increased productivity across the workforce.”



NETGEAR®, the NETGEAR® Logo and Connect with Innovation are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of NETGEAR®, Inc., in the United States and/or other countries. © 2008 NETGEAR®, Inc. All rights reserved.