

“VAMS MANAGEMENT OF MOBILE ASSETS ARRIVES AS A SOLUTION TO REDUCE ASSET TURNS, INVENTORIES AND SHRINKAGE”

WHITE PAPER—VALBREA ASSET MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (VAMS)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Valbrea Asset Management System (VAMS) software provides the solution for resolving issues with accurately tracking mobile assets and measuring performance of field personnel. Businesses leveraging traditional inventory systems to track mobile assets issued to field personnel find themselves with a gap in tracking, or void, between the issuance of the asset to the field personnel and the appearance of the asset installed at a customer location or returned back to the supply point. The activities of field personnel regarding the assets do not normally fit with a traditional inventory management system that was designed for warehouse inventory management, shipping and receiving. VAMS augments the capabilities of traditional systems with an easy-to-use software application filling in that gap. Valbrea’s VAMS system will reduce costs and increase efficiencies and productivity of your workforce and the assets being tracked.

BACKGROUND

As companies develop and offer new services and expand into new markets they usually leverage their traditional inventory management systems already in position that are used for warehouse inventory and logistics management. One clear example is a service offering by a company with end customers that require unique equipment to be installed at each customer location, something which may or may not have been required for prior services. This requires issuance of the assets to field personnel or sometimes third parties (subcontractors). When this occurs, the processes forced upon field personnel are determined by the back office systems usually already in place. The result is field personnel focused on satisfying new installs and customers, being hindered by the routine processes imposed upon their daily activities by existing systems they’re required to utilize. To maintain records and track these mobile assets companies utilize the default systems they have already in place. These systems have usually been designed as traditional warehouse inventory management systems driven by a point of sale (POS) system approach. An inherent conflict is formed by allowing the system to define the process rather than the system being designed to support the process. In most cases, the existing inventory management system can be used to track the assets up to the point at which they are delivered to a field person and placed in his vehicle; however, the existing inventory management system is not designed to collect information regarding the activities around those assets. A gap exists between the point at which a field person picks up an asset and when that asset either is installed and shows up on the network or when that technician turns the asset back into the supply point.

Current inventory management systems focus on traditional warehousing, receiving and shipping of assets; they do not address the impact of activities of the individuals utilizing the assets downstream. Processes designed with the traditional inventory management system as a backbone leave the gap open to the reality where:

- Individual and truck inventories are not accurate.
- Inventory levels are not accurately maintained or managed.
- The transferring of assets between technicians can’t be easily tracked.
- Individual technicians aren’t held accountable for assets they claim to have not received.
- Auditing of individual technicians and the assets they possess is costly and interrupts technician’s daily activities.

Typically what occurs with these types of assets is that they follow the normal supply chain process and then at some point, usually at a work center or yard, are issued out to individual field personnel where they take possession of the assets. Traditional systems and supply chain management typically produce a bottleneck of activity with the field personnel at the supply points. Not only is productivity lost from the time spent dealing

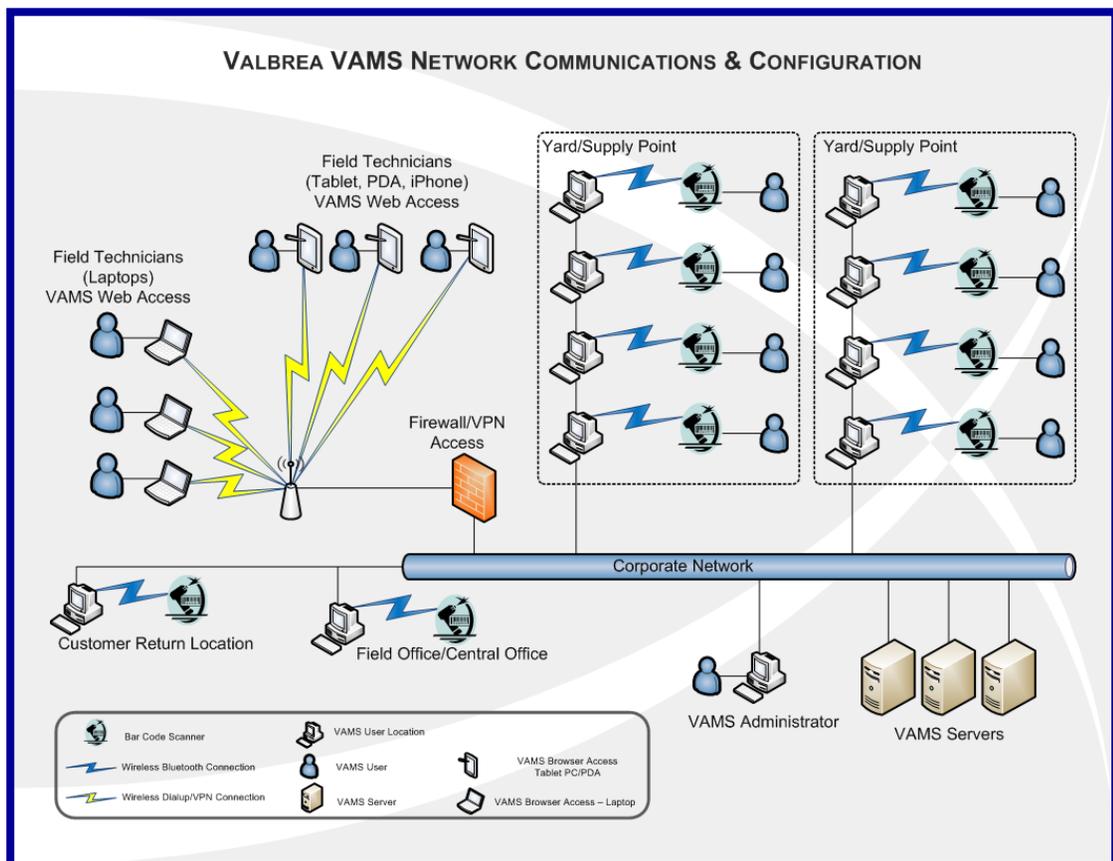
with systems that aren't streamlined to support the processes, but compliance with processes by field personnel also diminishes and becomes a management concern. To reduce the impact of the potential bottleneck, supply sometimes "checks out" the assets to each of the field personnel in advance and then places the assets in a location to be picked up. This reduces the impact of the bottleneck, but diminishes the ability to hold individuals accountable for those assets. For example, field personnel may not receive the assets checked out to them because of another individual picking up the wrong assets. Because the traditional systems focus on tracking the assets through a traditional warehouse, shipping and receiving environment the activities that impact the status of the asset outside of that traditional process are missed.

Because traditional asset management solutions are focused on inventory storage, ordering, delivery and receipt they operate well in a proactive and controlled environment, whereas the activities of individuals surrounding mobile assets that are driven by more on-demand customer needs require a different focus that's reactive to those activities.

SOLUTION: VALBREA ASSET MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (VAMS)

Valbrea provides the solution for tracking mobile assets and their status' through the gap. That solution is the Valbrea Asset Management System—VAMS. VAMS is designed for ease-of-use by field personnel while at the supply point or in the field. Using barcode scanners (or RFID inputs, or other input methods) and a fully web-based system architecture, VAMS accurately tracks the status and flow of each individual asset at each point of activity. Those activities are:

- Receipt of an asset by field personnel from a supply point
- Transfer of an asset to another field person
- "Hot Seating" of field personnel in vehicles
- Installation of an asset on an active network
- Return of an asset by a field person to a supply point
- Return of an asset by a customer to a return point
- Auditing of assets assigned to field personnel



The system is designed to compel compliance to processes by the users. This is done by allowing certain functions to occur with the barcode scanner (or similar input device) at supply points and return points and other functions to occur through the web browser. Most mobile assets today are tracked by bar codes representing a unique ID number or serial number. Sometimes radio frequency identification (RFID) tags are utilized. The individual technology chosen for the inputs into the system does not impact the use of the VAMS solution and can be customized to accept other inputs. Accompanied with a self-correcting approach to the design, the system can accommodate the process required to achieve the greatest efficiency instead of the system driving the process. The self-correcting of status to the most accurate information not only keeps data as up to date as possible, but it makes it easy for administrators and managers to identify which field personnel are utilizing the system and following processes correctly and those that are not.

The use of barcode scanners is not unique to VAMS as most inventory management systems utilize barcode scanners as a primary input device. However, VAMS use of the scanner does not require a user to enter a user ID and password into a computer before using the barcode scanner. The process and methods utilized by VAMS allows the user to use only the barcode scanner without having to access the computer or even see the computer screen. VAMS eliminates the traditional point of sale (POS) approach to inventory management. VAMS is a multi-tier, web-based software system that is easy to access and use from any location on a corporate network or the internet. (See the Valbrea VAMS Network Communication & Configuration diagram above on Page 2.)

The primary objective of VAMS is to provide an asset management and tracking system for mobile assets that is particularly easy for the user to record status and ownership changes of assets. This primary objective is achieved by providing users and administrators the ability to record this information by utilizing VAMS for:

- **Check-Out** - The Check-Out function allows Users to Check-Out assets using a bar code scanner without the need for the user to view a user interface or type a User ID and password into a PC for access to the system.
- **Check-In** - The Check-In function allows Users to Check-In assets using a bar code scanner without the need for the user to view a user interface or type a User ID and password into a PC for access to the system.
- **Auditing** – The Audit function allows Users or Administrators to verify assets in the possession of a User (for instance in his/her vehicle) using a barcode scanner without the need for the User or Administrator to view a user interface or type a User ID and password to access the system. Once the Audit is complete, the administrator views exception reports via a web browser and may automatically reconcile any exceptions identified to further maintain the accuracy of the status' of the assets. This is completed through daily activities of Users or Administrators (Supervisors) using the barcode scanner in a wireless batch mode that allows activity beyond the distance of the wireless connection. Audits of assets in vehicles or remote locations can be done quickly and without negative impact to the daily routine of the field personnel.
- **Hot Seating** - “Hot Seating” of field personnel can be easily done with the barcode scanner at the individual’s vehicle in a few short minutes when the need arises. As vehicle vs. workforce ratios increase to reduce costs, the demand for “Hot Seating” increases. VAMS provides the solution to the movement of field personnel between vehicles without time-consuming paperwork or system access requirements.
- **Reason Codes** – Reason Codes may be utilized during any of the actions of Check-Out, Check-In or Audit using the bar code scanner. These Reason Code creation and definitions are defined by the customer as needed.
- **Asset Re-Assignment** - The Re-Assignment function allows Users in the field to re-assign an asset to another User via a web browser (using their User ID and Password) without the use of a bar code scanner. This process will show the assignment of the asset and acceptance of the asset by the two Users.
- **Accurate Asset Status** - VAMS provides for tracking of ownership of Assets (set-top boxes, ONTs, routers, other mobile assets, etc.) from the actions of Check-Out, Audit through Check-In for the status of: Assigned, Re-Assigned, In Use , Lost, Deleted, and Available.

Other uses and benefits of VAMS, from performance monitoring to tool tracking, are inherently available to the customer because of the design and capabilities of VAMS:

- **Scanner: Batch Mode** - VAMS allows for Assets to be Checked-Out, Checked-In, Re-assigned, and Audited at each User's vehicle or other location beyond the range of the wireless connection for the Scanner. The VAMS system is unique in providing this capability without the risk of loss of data, the need for the User to interface with a device other than the Scanner, or the need to carry other devices, such as laptops, to and from each vehicle or location.
- **User Views** - VAMS allows Users to logon via a web browser to view the assets checked-out by that User.
- **Administration of Users** – VAMS allows administrators to create and manage system users
- **Administration of Locations** – VAMS allows administrators to create and manage location information for which activities are associated.
- **Administrative Reports** - VAMS provides reports as to the location and status of each asset (See Reports Above).

VAMS has demonstrated the functionality that eliminates the bottleneck created from manual entry of user ID's & passwords at a PC, and makes it easy for field personnel to use; therefore, increasing the probability of use, compliance to procedures, and accuracy of data. The self-correcting design of the system keeps asset status' as accurate as possible. For instance, if a field technician fails to reassign or scan an asset, the next activity with that asset with the system will be picked up and "catch-up" the status to the most recent and accurate. The system's design allows for flexibility to accommodate desired processes and needs while at the same time responding to dynamic conditions across your resource pool.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

Improvements and efficiency gains across a broad spectrum of the operations are realized from VAMS. The system's design and functionality deliver results to the customer that include:

- Increased inventory accuracy
- Increased accountability
- Reduction of asset turns
- Reduction of actual inventories carried by users
- Elimination of routine large scale audit costs
- Procedure compliance by users
- Elimination of bottlenecks in daily activities tied to assets
- Performance measurement & management of personnel
- Complements traditional inventory management systems already in place and can be integrated with those processes and systems

Valbrea's VAMS system will reduce costs and increase efficiencies and productivity of your workforce and the assets being tracked.



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