

Storm Advisory

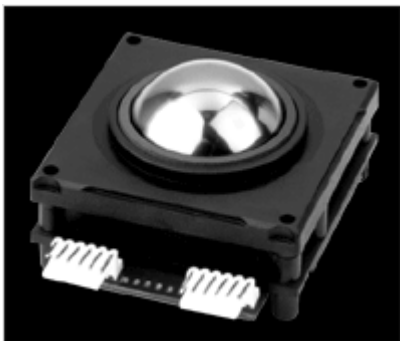
When the manufacturer of the world's toughest keyboard wanted to integrate a trackball, nothing they could find measured up! So they searched for the best and then re-built it from the ground up! In doing so they produced what seems to be the ultimate pointing device.

Asked by NCR for a rugged, responsive and above all reliable pointing device as a feature of their kiosk keyboard, STORM began an extensive evaluation of available components. "Some trackballs achieved durability", comments STORM's Managing Director Peter Ward, "Others were more or less responsive to the touch. Some were easier than others to clean and maintain. Unfortunately many could not withstand even a moderate soaking in cleaning fluids. It became clear that no single product had all the required elements to match the standard set by the keyboard. An evolution of established trackball technology was required", says Ward.

STORM worked with a Technology Partner to develop a trackball with improved resistance to extreme environments and enhanced responsiveness. Firmware was developed to ensure seamless compatibility with a wider range of operating platforms and a plan developed to ensure world class, volume production at STORM's Manufacturing Division. Only when field and laboratory testing confirmed that the new generation trackball met and exceeded STORM's performance targets, was the renowned STORM trademark applied.

Trackball production is now underway at the company's Maldon, England facility. "This was an important step", explains Richard Mundy (Storm's Technical Director) "There is one major feature of any STORM keyboard that most customers never see". He is referring to the manufacturing technology employed at their purpose designed factory. As part of their ISO9001 and World Class program, a sophisticated automatic scanning system has been integrated into the cellular manufacturing system. This optical based inspection system can detect

the smallest defect. It is used to check the position and colour of keytops, it checks to ensure the correct language is used on keytop graphics; it will even find the smallest punctuation mark inaccurately positioned on a keytop. The same system can be used to check concentricity and location of the trackball components. This optical scan is combined with a customised, PC based, keyboard and trackball function analysis to ensure that correct operational characteristics are tested, measured, recorded and cross referenced to a unique tracking number.



Storm Interface is a trading name of Keymat Technology Ltd.



"Other manufacturers employ functional tests," admits Mundy. "However, to our knowledge, no other manufacturer combines environmental testing as part of the routine production process". Keyboards used in a public environment need to be regularly cleaned. This is often achieved with a sprayed liquid cleaning agent and a scrubbing brush. These detergent based liquids will quickly find any potential leak in the keyboards water seals. STORM are the first to carry out a rigorous 100% test for leakage. Each and every keyboard is subjected to the vacuum chamber. This test exercises and proves the IP65 rated seals. Any weakness or defect is exposed by a tell-tale decay in the vacuum reservoir.

STORM's policy of defect free manufacture, backed by unsurpassed inspection and testing, explains why hardware builders (and users) recognize the STORM keyboard as a kiosk's badge of quality.