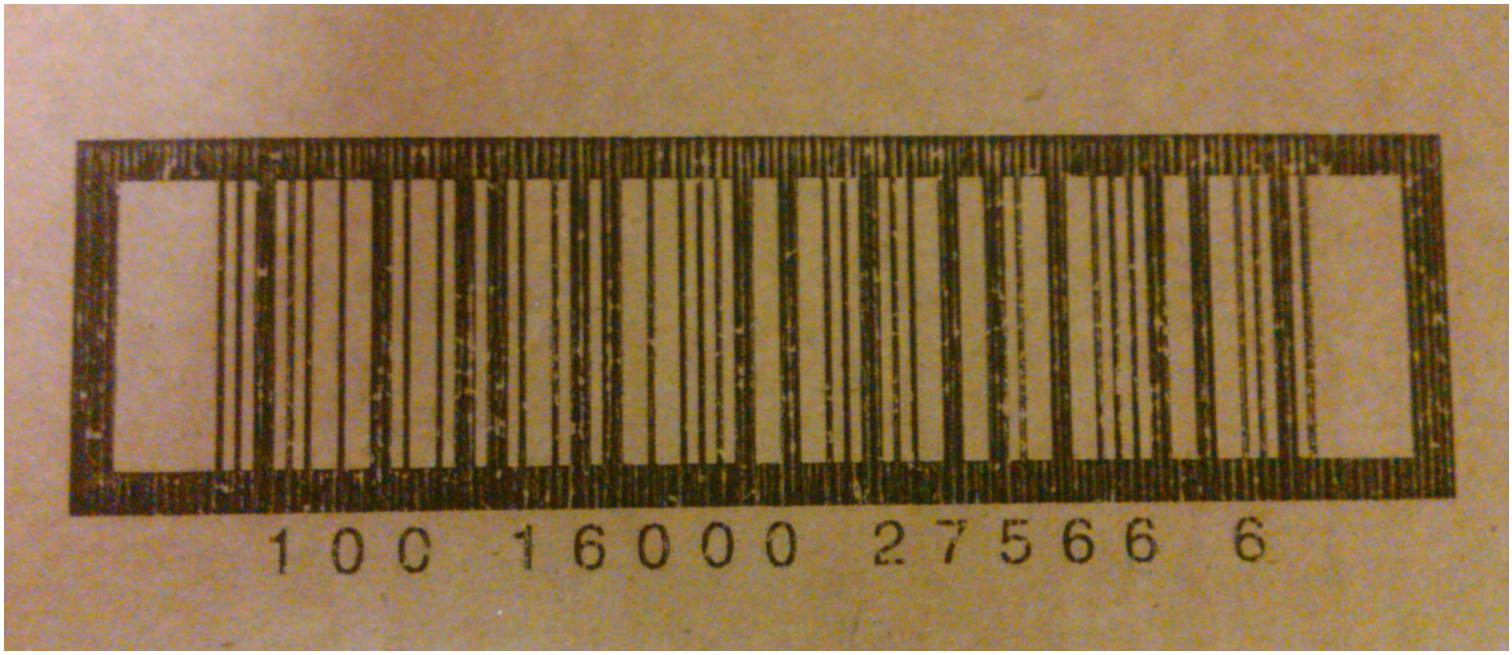
APPLICATION BREAKDOWN:

Low Contrast Barcode Reader



The effectiveness of an automated data collection system can be hampered by low quality input. Shipper barcodes printed on brown corrugated cases have low contrast scores in the best of circumstances. As print nozzles become clogged or there are inconsistencies in line speeds the quality of the code degrades, making it impossible for most barcode scanners to reliably read them.

Specifically for this application, Sick developed a low-contrast barcode reader that uses a specially designed elliptical light spot. Combined with Sick's SMART decoding algorithm the low-contrast scanner can read codes that are faded due to age, printed in light colors, or are printed on a background color that lowers the contrast level.

Not only can the scanner read the low contrast code, it can also be part of a system of quality checking. Its ability to read almost anything has the disadvantage of failing to alert the operators that code quality is substandard. However, the Sick barcode scanners generate an array of qualitative and quantitative statistics for every barcode read. These values can be included in the data string from the scanner. If the Code Security (readability) of the codes is consistently poor, that information can be communicated to the supplier, letting them know that they need to improve the quality of their printing.

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