

Elliott Loohire enjoys a Spirit of efficiency

Successful companies are often those that use the latest technology to their advantage. Elliott Loohire owes much of its success to an outstanding IT team that keeps in touch with the latest developments and uses technology to deliver further improvements in its operational capabilities each year. The company recently streamlined its administration procedures by introducing Dolphin® 7900 mobile computers supplied by Spirit Data Capture Limited.



Elliott Loohire was established in the late 1980s, and specialises in the hire of portable toilets and temporary fencing. The company currently has over 15,000 toilet units and over 60,000 fencing panels for hire. Thanks partly to its thriving IT team, the firm has enjoyed year-on-year growth since its formation.

Some time ago, the company purchased barcode readers for use in asset tracking and management. Although these performed the task well, they weren't capable of more advanced applications, such as signature capture. ▶



Case Study

Elliott Loohire's Systems Manager, Martin Davies, explains: "We handle a very large number of transactions, and therefore generate huge amounts of paperwork. To move the company forward, we decided to start looking for a smart device that could be used for signature capture. This would enable us to reduce the amount of administration involved with the paperwork."

The company wanted a device that was extremely rugged and reliable, as it would be used in the field in all types of weather. It therefore checked through construction and computing editorials for possible solutions and also carried out an Internet search for a 'ruggedised PDA'. This led the firm to Spirit Data Capture, an independent company that specialises in automated data capture technologies.

Spirit recommended the Dolphin® 7900, a versatile mobile computer manufactured by Hand Held Products. The Dolphin can read a wide range of barcode symbologies, has OCR (Optical Character Recognition) capabilities and can also capture digital images and signatures. It provides Wireless Full Area Networking? (WFAN) with co-located GSM/GPRS, 802.11b, and Bluetooth radios, giving seamless real-time data and voice communications.

Martin Davies continues: "We had seen and considered other devices, but chose the Dolphin on the basis of its portability, ruggedness and its features." After a successful pilot trial in April 2006, Elliott Loohire ordered 116 Dolphins, which were rolled out to the company's nine depots between September 2006 and February 2007. The mobile computers are powered by the firm's vehicles and are mounted in vehicle cradles.

Spirit provided back-up support during the project whenever it was needed – particularly in relation to the software development kit for the Dolphins – although Elliott Loohire carried out most of the development.

Martin comments: "We deliver and collect over 1,000 toilets each week, and each hired unit has to be cleaned weekly. All of this work is graphically represented on a computerised 'board', which uses route planning software to maximise efficiency. All of the Dolphins integrate directly with the board and highlight jobs as



they are completed. This gives us a visual representation of progress on any particular day. If a driver falls behind, jobs can be moved to other drivers, and the Dolphins are automatically updated using the GPRS communications.

"Previously, each job (over 8,000 per week) had to be manually checked from the paperwork, which was scanned into a paperless office system. The Dolphins now automatically create and file the necessary paperwork, eliminating the time needed for scanning and indexing.

"They also enable us to carry out same day deliveries. We can check the location of a driver using GPS and allocate a job to them which will automatically update their Dolphin 7900 within minutes, via GPRS. There is no need for any paperwork."

"One of our major costs is for fuel for our 120 vehicles. With the Dolphin's GPS ability, we expect to improve the accuracy and efficiency of the whole tracking process, including finding the location of the portable toilets rapidly. This should in turn reduce our fuel costs."

He concludes: "I am very happy with the level of service we have received from Spirit. The Dolphins have proved to be extremely reliable and robust, and are giving the results we wanted. This should ultimately prove that they were an excellent choice. Furthermore, the drivers are very happy with them as it means they spend much less time filling out paperwork!"



For further information contact us at:

Vale House, Aston Lane North, Preston Brook, Cheshire WA7 3PD

t: 0845 337 3243 f: 0870 762 2824 email: info@spiritdatacapture.co.uk

www.spiritdatacapture.co.uk