

Spirit helps WDH to manage its mobile devices

The use of mobile data capture devices has become widespread across many areas of industry, commerce and government. However, as the number of devices increases, monitoring them and troubleshooting any problems can give rise to the problems that the devices were purchased to overcome – inefficiency and unnecessary costs. When Wakefield and District Housing wanted greater control over its many mobile devices, it selected MobiControl, a mobile device management solution developed by SOTI Inc. This was supplied by independent consultancy, Spirit Data Capture Limited.

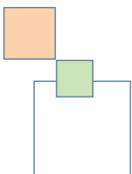
Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) is the largest single housing stock transfer organisation and England's fifth largest housing organisation. It is responsible for over 31,000 homes and employs some 1,400 people. It also manages over 50 sheltered housing schemes for elderly and vulnerable people – as well as a range of associated specialist services.

The ICT Department of WDH is responsible for maintaining and developing all of the organisation's ICT systems. It is committed to developing software and services that will support the business and that will enhance its efficiency and effectiveness, to ensure that tenants receive the highest possible levels of service.

Some time ago, the ICT department developed a mobile solution for its mobile workers, with the aim of reducing waste and eliminating unnecessary steps

from its processes. This led to the department purchasing a large number of Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs).

The PDAs helped to eliminate the paper-based element of WDH's Responsive Repairs process. They are used by a wide range of Responsive Repairs operatives, including plasterers, gas engineers, plumbers, electricians and joiners, as well as members of general trades. ▶



Case Study

Reducing the need to travel

Wendy Popplewell, the department's Business Analyst, explains: "The PDAs allow our operatives to manage their own work. This means that they no longer have to travel to a depot for their job tickets. They are able to manage their own workload by ringing the tenants to find out more information so that they can attend the repair with any parts that might be needed.

"This in turn eliminated the need for them to go back and forth to stores and depots. Basically, it enables the operatives to get the job right first time. It also means that they can arrange their schedule so that they can go to tenants who live in the same areas on the same day, achieving further fuel economies.

"Unfortunately, if there was a problem with the PDA, the operative often had to travel back to the ICT department, eliminating some of the efficiencies that had been achieved by using the mobile devices. We therefore started looking for a solution that would obviate this need – so that if there was an issue with the device's software, the operatives wouldn't have to return here."

Sourcing a suitable solution

The ICT department wanted a solution that would give a reliable level of remote access to the PDAs for troubleshooting purposes. It looked at several solutions, including MobiControl, a device management solution developed by a Canadian-based company, SOTI Inc.

Wendy had previously seen MobiControl demonstrated during a visit to a mobile phone company in Leeds. However, it was only available as a package with a mobile phone contract. She therefore carried out an Internet search and found that it was distributed in the UK by Spirit Data Capture.

MobiControl is an advanced Device Management, Helpdesk and Security solution for mobile and desktop computing devices. Built on award-winning technology, it offers a rapid and reliable performance over any network, for any size of deployment.

Wendy says: "We opted for MobiControl because it's easy to use, is logical and doesn't require a huge amount of training. It's intuitive and

has great help pages for further information. Other solutions we explored just didn't have the same level of functionality."

Spirit provided an online demonstration version of the MobiControl system in March, so that WDH was able to trial it for two months before being ready to install it. MobiControl has now been installed on WDH's server, and an agent (a piece of software) was also installed on a total of 120 PDAs. The agent sits on the device and monitors it, pushing data back to the server from time to time. The ICT department received support (including several webinars and a URL download link) from Spirit at every stage of the installation process.

The end result: greater efficiency

Wendy continues: "We are now able to access our operatives' PDAs remotely, which enables them to continue working even if they have an issue with their PDA. This means that the cost efficiencies that we gain from the operatives using their PDAs to streamline their schedules and to reduce travelling are no longer lost if something happens to the PDA. They no longer have to come back to headquarters - which could entail a 30 mile round trip.

"Because MobiControl allows us to manage the PDAs remotely, we can diagnose and resolve any faults. Now, only hardware problems have to come back to the ICT department. We have also been able to start transferring the support of the PDAs over to our central Service Desk, rather than this being a specialist support area."

MobiControl is also able to track users if necessary and can send a message to a device to 'kill' the application if the device is stolen. Wendy comments: "Although we don't use MobiControl's tracking facility to track our personnel, it has proved useful when PDAs have been lost or stolen."

She concludes: "MobiControl is excellent – it's good value for money and is easy to install. We've had great support throughout from Spirit. They've provided a good follow-up service, they've been attentive and have always come back to me when I've had queries. If they don't know the answer to a specific question, they're quite happy to contact SOTI in Canada and sort it out. We would be happy to use them again if we needed a product that they could provide."



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