

Case study

BSkyB

British Sky Broadcasting



At a glance

Industry: Consumer Goods

Application: Installations and Customer Service

Products: Intermec CN3

Intermec Supports BSKyB Customer Service

About BSKyB

British Sky Broadcasting operates Sky Digital, a subscription television service in the UK and Ireland. With 9.2 million subscribers, the entertainment company is now in one in three households across the UK and Ireland. It also supplies telephony and is the UK's fastest-growing broadband provider. Sky's main headquarters are in Osterley, London with a large number of staff – including its Field Operations team – in Scotland. The number of subscribers continues to grow, and in order to respond to the increased demand for new Sky, Sky+ and Sky+HD installations, BSKyB sought a reliable solution to facilitate the work of its field service team. For this it turned to Intermec Technologies.

The Challenge

Sky engineers complete between 12,500 and 20,000 jobs throughout the country each day, which equates to some 4-7 daily customer home visits per engineer. In order to work effectively, they need a solid communications system: How can the Sky main office provide its engineers with their daily job schedules and the necessary accompanying details? How

can it efficiently communicate with its engineers throughout the day? How can the engineers easily contact the customers whose homes they must visit?

Sky had been equipping its engineers with PDAs but was interested in exploring other options. Because these devices were consumer-grade products, they were fragile and broke relatively easily. The batteries on the devices also degraded rapidly, lasting only 3-4 hours if they were not charged between customer visits. This required Sky to not only frequently replace the batteries but also to purchase in-car chargers for all of its engineers. It also meant that if a charger was broken, the engineer could not use their device.

In addition, Sky sought to provide its customers with enhanced services including providing them with a specific time window for the engineer's visit. "We must take into consideration other commitments our customers may have such as the school run or going to the supermarket," explains Marion Scott, Head of Supply Chain Services for BSKyB. "They don't want to have to spend all day at home waiting for an engineer."



The Solution and Its Benefits

In order to provide its engineers with the most robust communications equipment available, BSKyB purchased 2,100 Intermec CN3s. The CN3 is an industrial-class handheld computer with integrated WiFi, Bluetooth, GPS and a choice of WAN radio (GSM/EDGE or 3G CDMA/EV-DO). Specially designed to withstand the rigors of industrial environments, these rugged devices are resistant to shocks, water and dust. They also have a 13-hour battery life for use while on the road, making them highly dependable.

The Intermec CN3's increased reliability means that BSKyB is able to provide its customers with the most accurate information possible regarding the arrival time of the engineer. BSKyB uses the CN3 to send its engineers the details of their jobs for the following day: The engineers can then call the customers to give them the time window in which they expect to arrive and to make sure the customer will be home at that time. If the engineer is delayed for any reason during the course of the day, they can call the customer to inform them.

Another benefit of the rugged device is that it enables the use of customised software. (In comparison, consumer devices like PDAs generally only work with limited software types.) Sky was therefore able to design a special CN3 application that makes it easy for the

engineers to update the main office of their progress throughout the day. An engineer simply has to click on a pull-down menu in order to indicate whether they have just arrived at or just completed a job. The information is then pushed into a backend system that allows the main office to monitor the locations of their engineers, giving them visibility of jobs completed in real time. In addition, the specially-designed software has another important feature as well: It allows engineers to order equipment that they need for their work (cabling, set top boxes, etc.). An engineer simply has to click on a pull-down menu which lists the stock items and input the number they need. The items are then ready for loading into their van the next morning.

The CN3 and its software also allows the Sky main office to ensure that all jobs are completed in the course of the day they are scheduled for: Previously, the office had to rely on – and wait for – an engineer to call in towards the end of the day to inform them that they still had a number of uncompleted jobs. Now, if the office observes that an engineer is delayed, they can send an additional engineer early on to help with the remaining jobs if they think it necessary. This greater ability to monitor its engineers also means that the office can share responsibility with the engineer for updating the customer at their next job if they are delayed.



In addition, the Intermec CN3 comes with a built-in barcode scanner, which the consumer-grade devices did not possess. This greatly benefits the engineers, who can scan the set top boxes which they are installing in order to automatically record which version of the product is in a customer's home. Not only does the scanner save time but it also increases accuracy since errors are prone to occur when manually inputting a barcode sequence.

Overall, the Intermec CN3 has afforded considerable cost savings for Sky. "We find that the total cost of ownership is much lower than with the previous devices," Marion Scott explains. "We expected to keep the old devices at most 2-3 years. With the CN3, however, we hope to be able to keep them at least 5 years. And when a device does need repair, we have a service agreement with Intermec which replaces the device extremely rapidly."

The Selection of the Intermec CN3

Sky chose the Intermec CN3 after a thorough review of the handhelds on the market. The company initially looked at some ten different devices, then selected three for its engineers to assess in field trials. "We really believe in getting the engineers involved in the selection process," says Marion Scott. "Ultimately, they are the people who use the device and therefore know what functions are most useful to them." The results were clear: The engineers preferred the Intermec CN3's functionality and usability.

Another factor in choosing the CN3 was the strong support and service provided by Intermec. "We were very impressed by Intermec themselves as an organization – how they worked with us, the excellent service they provided during the field trials and their flexibility in terms of service

arrangements. The account manager was also great at accommodating last minute requests or extra needs we had that were not in the agreement," says Marion Scott. "The solution was also complex because it relied on Intermec for the product and the hardware, on a third-party provider for the software and on Vodafone for the telephony requirements. But Intermec was fantastic at working in partnership with them to create the best solution for Sky."

Future Uses

Sky is looking at developing several additional functions: "Ideally, we would like our technology to be so advanced that when an engineer clicks on their CN3 tab to indicate that they have arrived at a job, this triggers an automated SMS, email or phone call to inform the customer at the next job and provide them with an estimate of how much time it will be until the engineer arrives," explains Marion Scott.

Conclusions

The selection of the Intermec CN3 has brought Sky many benefits ranging from a robust and reliable device with a long battery life to enabling Sky to communicate more precise arrival times to its customers, providing customised software for tracking job progression and ordering stock, helping the main office manage job completion, improving accuracy and efficiency through its scanning function and generating cost savings. Its high level of performance during field trials and Intermec's strong customer support were also important considerations in selecting the device. In fact, it has proven so successful that Sky has ordered an additional 840 CN3s in order to effectively manage its new installations and client needs.



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