

# Case Study

## BlackBerry Enterprise Solution Improves Quality Control For Retail Gas Industry



**Company:** Suncor Energy is an integrated, North American energy company that refines oil and gas products for its gas stations under the Sunoco brand.

**Industry:** Utilities/Energy

**Region:** Americas

**Company Size:** Large Enterprise

**Email Environment:** Microsoft® Exchange

**Type of Solution:** ERP- Business Intelligence, Workflow and Approvals

**BlackBerry Solution:** Electronic Survey - Custom Application

**Challenge:** Suncor's quality control program involves a 300-question, paper-based form completed at each of their gas stations. The system was inefficient, often resulting in week-long delays between a manager reporting a problem and action being taken.

**Solution:** With the BlackBerry® Enterprise Solution already in place, Suncor equipped its Territory Managers with BlackBerry® smartphones and an application that gathers and reports on survey information from the field.

**Results:**

- Faster reporting
- Accelerated decision-making
- Convergence to one device
- Future potential



## The Challenge: Get a Faster Picture of Performance at Retail Gas Stations

Since pricing is often very similar from one gas retailer to the next, the key to competitiveness is customer service. Customers notice the little things – like half-filled shelves, messy washrooms or the neglected appearance of a business. It was this thinking that drove Suncor to develop its Strive for Excellence program, a quality control commitment that extends from the cleanliness of retail areas to the safety of all their Sunoco gas stations.

The program depends on each Territory Manager visiting up to 20 of Suncor's 300 gas stations in their area, auditing performance with a 300 question list, and reporting to station managers and head office. Although critical to their business, the inspection process was cumbersome and slow.

Each inspector ran through a checklist on paper, noted the results, and then inputted the data to a reporting system. For a time, Suncor moved from paper to a non-wireless PDA to collect the data. But the process lacked the immediacy that would truly make an impact on the business.

Suncor realized that they could improve the efficiency and speed of this system by switching from a paper-based to an online system. Suncor already knew the potential of the BlackBerry Enterprise Solution because of their corporate users and decided to expand their use of this technology.

## Why BlackBerry?

An earlier experiment with non-wireless PDAs laid the groundwork for extending the use of the BlackBerry Enterprise Solution. From it, Suncor realized that having a digital checklist eliminated the task of manually inputting the data after it was collected. But the system wasn't wireless, so there was often a delay of up to two weeks before Territory Managers would transfer the information to a laptop.

"From the time you actually entered the data into the PDA, to the time you would sync it up to the laptop, to the time you'd batch it all up, and transmit it to head office, to the time someone would actually calculate the scores, could be a substantial gap," says Geoff LeQuelenec, Business Analyst. "We wanted to speed up this process and get assessment reports to the station operators as soon as possible."

When Suncor looked at its existing use of the BlackBerry Enterprise Solution, they realized that they could use its out-of-the-box capabilities to improve the Strive for Excellence program. Since the BlackBerry solution supports the deployment of wireless applications on the BlackBerry smartphones, the company decided to build its own application, an Intranet-based electronic survey.

"The BlackBerry Enterprise Solution had the browser we needed, the wireless email solution and the encryption, without having to tack on a lot of other things," says LeQuelenec.

By simply clicking on the icon, the 300-question survey would pop up on the BlackBerry smartphones. Territory Managers could fill in the survey on site and automatically send the results back to the head office. The online form would be transmitted to a back end Intranet SAP portal for everyone to see the results.

***"The BlackBerry Enterprise Solution was able to do what we needed to out-of-the-box without us needing to add a lot of hardware and software onto it."***

~GEOFF LEQUELENEC, Business Analyst

## More Opportunities Ahead

Suncor learned that creating their own wireless application was not as complicated as they thought. Since this project has been completed, even newer technologies have been launched to simplify the development and deployment process.

For example, subsequent releases of the BlackBerry® Mobile Data System offer a set of rapid application development and deployment tools. Users like Suncor can develop applications with the simplicity and manageability of a traditional browser-based solution – all within the most cost-effective framework.

“We see some really good fits with the BlackBerry Enterprise Solution in our retail environment,” says LeQuelenec. “One of the things we’re looking at is extending BlackBerry to help manage our pricing system. That means we’ll not only be able to manage the quality of the gas station, but some of its financials right at the site.”

## Business Snapshot Leads to Better Decision-making

One of the most beneficial results of the new process is the ability to see information from a survey as soon as it’s completed. Instead of waiting weeks to generate a paper report for the retailers to look at, station managers or company directors can login to the company’s SAP portal within minutes of the report arriving. Territory Managers and station managers can even run through the report together while they are both onsite.

At head office, key decision-makers have a continual snapshot of the performance of their gas stations. They can move more quickly to analyze data and adapt the business to meet changing customer demands.

“Having data collection on-the-spot has really helped us to identify problems much more quickly and also resolve them much more quickly,” says LeQuelenec. “Instead of having to wait weeks until we’ve identified a problem, we are able to catch it very fast and resolve it right onsite. Managers and directors at head office can look for trends and make changes in the entire retail network very quickly.”

Within Suncor, the BlackBerry Enterprise Solution is not only appreciated for its impact on quality control. LeQuelenec says moving to BlackBerry smartphones has reduced the need for laptops and pagers. Although they have not yet done an ROI study, he feels the savings are excellent. The Territory Managers also like the BlackBerry smartphones for their integrated functionality in messaging, phone, Browser and calendar.

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## Results

**Faster Reporting:** Moving from a paper-based to an electronic survey speeds up the reporting process from weeks to minutes

**Accelerated Decision-Making:** Station managers and company decision-makers can resolve problems faster, improving competitiveness and analyzing trends more quickly

**Convergence to One Device:** Territory Managers have replaced multiple devices with one easy-to-use smartphone that does it all

**Future Potential:** Out-of-the-box technology allowed Suncor to cost-effectively build their own application and lay the groundwork for other areas of their business

***"Our Territory Managers like BlackBerry smartphones because they've lightened their belts. It's taken them from having a phone and a pager down to just one device, and given them more power in the field, without having to carry multiple devices."***

~GEOFF LEQUELENEC, *Business Analyst*

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