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BlackBerry Case Study

Torex Retail
Field Services



Retail systems provider makes field services future-ready with new BlackBerry® solution

Largest rollout of an independent BlackBerry-based business line application in the world

The Challenge

Torex Retail is Europe's leading independent retail systems solutions provider. Its solutions cover all facets of the retail systems business, from leading edge electronic point of sale software to back office software, and from sophisticated performance and productivity systems to loss prevention and basket analysis solutions. In the UK alone Torex's solutions handle more than 25 million customer transactions a week – more than 45 per cent of all UK retail sales.

Professional services are a vital part of Torex's business. More than two thirds of its 700 professional service employees are directly involved in the development, delivery, deployment and support of solutions for customers.

In 2005 Torex Retail felt locked in. Its field engineers had been using a mobile field services application for some years to manage service calls, but the device on which it was running was due to be end of life in 2006. The existing system was based on old communication technologies and gave limited opportunities for growth, since it wouldn't let Torex add new features such as service call history and inventory management.

Moreover, migrating the field services management application to the new version of the existing device would require a costly rewrite of the software. And because the device used a propriety operating system, the new version of the software wouldn't be compatible with other devices. If it was going to incur the cost of reengineering its field services application, Torex reckoned that it should opt for a more flexible, more open solution.



The Solution

Torex Retail contacted Interchange Group, its long-standing service and customer management software supplier, to help find a new solution. Torex wanted to benefit from current mobile technology that could carry them forward for the next five years and beyond. They also wanted to reduce costs while improving productivity, customer service levels and security.

Torex had demanding requirements. It wanted a single device for both voice and data. The device had to be robust and secure. It also had to be easy to use; Torex didn't want to waste time and money retraining its 500 field engineers. The device had to have an integrated keyboard and applications for providing operational and office functionality while on the move.

The device would run a distributed field services application. The application would have to work equally well in or out of the office across Torex's entire European operation. It would have to be reliable, support current needs and provide a foundation for future improvements.

During a feasibility study Torex and Interchange explored a number of options. Together they decided that the functionality, security, and usability of BlackBerry® coupled with the flexibility and stability of Interchange's open and "future ready" Java based Mobility Suite for Service integrated with the Interchange Service Management system would best meet their business requirements.

In just 12 weeks Interchange implemented the solution. Torex's back office service management application was integrated with the Interchange Mobility Suite running on BlackBerry 7290 devices. BlackBerry Mobile Data Services provided robust and efficient communications with the BlackBerry Enterprise Server™ and BlackBerry devices. Torex's service management application was rewritten in Java to make it open and future-ready.

"Ten users in the UK and five users in each of Torex's other main European markets tested the solution for four weeks in January 2006. Thanks to their feedback the solution was fine tuned and rollout began in February. We plan on equipping 500 users across Europe with the BlackBerry-based solution by the end of 2006," says Gordon Rogers, Operations Director for UK and Ireland, Torex Retail.

The Advantages

"BlackBerry wasn't new to Torex," says Rogers. At Torex UK senior executives had been using BlackBerry for a few years. But as he explains, "this new utilisation really opening our eyes to the possibilities offered by BlackBerry."

According to Rogers the new solution is "mile ahead of the old system." Now Torex's engineers have access to service call information, which they can view and update in real time while on the road. This year will also see the introduction of comprehensive local inventory management features, extension of call handling features and availability of call history – all from the BlackBerry device.

"The users love the new BlackBerry-based solution," says Rogers. "BlackBerry is much more advanced than the old devices we were using. The handhelds are smaller and therefore easier to carry. Users love everything about them—the interface, the colour screen, the keyboard."

Torex was concerned that migrating to a new version of the application running on a new device might upset the productivity of its field engineers. In fact, says Rogers, "from a usability point of view the BlackBerry device and the Interchange software are much friendlier than the old system. You can just pick it up and use it, which has saved us time and money on training and support."

The rollout has gone so smoothly that Torex and Interchange plan to extend the BlackBerry-based solution to all of Torex's European operations, with a target of 800 users.

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About BlackBerry

BlackBerry is an end-to-end solution developed by Research In Motion® Limited.

Founded in 1984, Research In Motion is a world leader in the wireless communications market.

For more information

www.blackberry.com/uk

europa@rim.com