

PHS Group polishes its service capabilities with mobility solutions

IBM helps a UK building maintenance service provider improve productivity and reduce waste

Overview

The need

PHS Group plc, a building maintenance provider in the United Kingdom and Ireland, sought to update its dispatch and billing systems to optimize productivity and further its environmental initiatives.

The solution

IBM end user services implemented a mobility solution, using Motorola digital assistant devices, to dispatch work orders, track productivity, transmit billing information and reduce manual processes.

The benefit

The IBM mobility solution helped PHS Group improve productivity by five percent, streamline operations and speed cash collections rates while significantly decreasing paper and printer systems costs.

PHS Group plc (PHS) provides workplace maintenance and cleaning services to more than 250,000 business customers in 300,000 locations in the United Kingdom and Ireland. A business and market leader in workplace services and waste management, PHS operates according to a “sustainable development” principle, pledging to meet customers’ needs without harming the environment or prejudicing future generations’ abilities. However, the organization’s paper-based dispatch and billing systems challenged its ability to fully execute this pledge.

Scouring the marketplace for a competitive edge

To maintain its leadership position, PHS periodically compares itself with its competition. In doing so, the company identified challenges that affected its sales, operations and conservation efforts. PHS was perceived as being behind the technology curve, making it difficult to win bids against competitors using mobile technology. The organization dedicated to environmentally friendly initiatives found that its hard copy dispatch and service records were inflexible and inefficient, generated volumes of printed documents, and caused significant paper and printing supplies expense. Further, the vehicle-dependent company lacked an energy-efficient dispatch plan that could help reduce carbon emissions.



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—Ian Featherstone, director of information systems, PHS Group plc

Based on this information, PHS sought a mobility service provider to create a plan that included hardware recommendations, device deployment, and maintenance and management services. “We consulted with all the major players in the marketplace and came up with a short list of five, including IBM,” said Ian Featherstone, director of information systems at PHS. After the tender process, PHS selected IBM® Global Technology Services® – Integrated Technology Services.

Procuring the right tools

IBM end user services – Mobile Enterprise Services created a pilot program for PHS using Motorola MC55 and MC65 Enterprise Digital Assistant (EDA) devices. At the end of the field test, Mobile Enterprise Services collaborated with IBM Alliance Partner Motorola Solutions, Inc. to design a cost-effective mobility hardware and support solution for PHS. For the initial deployment, Mobile Enterprise Services built device images that included third-party software, selected by the client, for each of the PHS divisions. According to Mr. Featherstone, “IBM loaded the images to the Motorola devices and then sent them out [to the service technicians]—it saved us from touching the [hardware] at all.”

In fact, Mobile Enterprise Services manages the ongoing end-to-end Motorola EDA device inventory deployment, repair and replacement responsibilities for PHS. This helps PHS avoid the expense of maintaining an internal group dedicated to mobility device management. To maximize field service productivity, Mobile Enterprise Services specialists maintain a cache of spare units that are imaged to meet the needs of PHS service technicians. “If we have a faulty device, the buffer stock enables drivers to swap out for a new device immediately ... that’s worked really well for us,” states Mr. Featherstone. When an out-of-service unit is received, the IBM team troubleshoots the device to determine whether IBM should repair it or send it to Motorola for restoration or replacement. In either case, stock is replenished in 24 hours.

Polishing mobility capabilities to maximize efficiencies

Without the worries of EDA device management, PHS teams can focus on the business and operational potential of mobile reporting and communications. The company’s newfound electronic reporting

Solution components

Hardware

- Motorola MC55 Enterprise Digital Assistant
- Motorola MC65 Enterprise Digital Assistant

Services

- IBM® Global Technology Services® – Integrated Technology Services
- IBM end user services – Mobile Enterprise Services

IBM Business Partner

- Motorola Solutions, Inc.
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— Ian Featherstone, director of information systems, PHS Group plc

capabilities provided the ability to dispatch standard and emergency orders to service technicians, document service start and completion times, identify geographical locations and capture customer signatures at the point of service. Revenue collection was expedited because PHS could deliver proof of service records by email in lieu of hard copy or faxed documents, significantly reducing paper and printing costs. Mr. Featherstone asserts, “It’s taken away a lot of the excuses that customers have for not paying us by claiming that [PHS] hasn’t performed the service.” The information also provided the ability to balance workloads and dispatch additional assignments for greater productivity. PHS expects additional efficiencies. “We believe there’s at least another 5 percent savings in fuel and increased productivity to be gained by directing [technicians] to their next job,” Mr. Featherstone remarked. “[The satellite navigation option] can take into account addresses, traffic conditions or the skills of another engineer who might be closer to another location.” The systematic routing may help reduce the company’s carbon dioxide emissions and decrease costs associated with congestion charges.

To promote new business development, PHS piloted an application that allows service technicians to report competitor’s products found in its customer’s site. “[Service technicians] can quickly note the competitor and the location of the product, then email the information off to our marketing department,” Mr. Featherstone continues. “[Marketing] can supply additional information to the sales force as it calls on the customer.” As new services, applications or programming changes are identified, Mobile Enterprise Services will manage device updates for appropriate service divisions.

Enjoying the benefits of a clean, efficient environment

The capabilities and ongoing support of Mobile Enterprise Services empower PHS and its commitment to sustainable development. Mr. Featherstone concluded: “IBM has worked with us for the past five years and 200 acquisitions. They were well-placed and in tune with what we do. We have every confidence that they are able to support us.”

For more information

To learn more about IBM Mobile Enterprise Services, please contact your IBM marketing representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/services/mobility



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