



UK vending machine firm increases productivity by 10% with BlackBerry solution

LTT Vending Group is the UK's leading independently owned vending machine company. Established in the 1960s, LTT Vending today operates from three regional depots – Leeds, Leicester and Lewes – and serves a range of industries, including education, healthcare and retail.

The Challenge

Replenishing and servicing the company's estate of vending machines is the responsibility of LTT Vending's 85 merchandisers and 20 technicians, who are backed up by 40 sales and office-based staff. With over 3,500 automatic vending machines in the field, and total vends in excess of 40 million per year, organising and performing service updates on vending machines is a complicated task. LTT Vending's merchandisers and technicians need to be in constant contact with each other and their customers to optimise this process.

LTT has always embraced new technologies to achieve its aim of being "the customers' choice." At first, the firm managed everything with paper forms. Then radios were installed in vans and mobile phones were given to all field workers. After a while merchandisers were equipped with handheld devices to simplify order taking, but the terminals needed to be physically taken to the depots to download the information onto a PC, preventing orders being prepared in advance. When mobile data services became more affordable, LTT Vending issued technicians with email access on PDAs, but corporate systems remained inaccessible and the merchandisers were still tied to their wired devices. Furthermore, work in the field was requiring more and more travel, which was increasing down time among field staff.

LTT Vending was keen to find a wireless solution that could replace its mix of mobile technologies with a single solution to improve daily productivity. "We needed mobile technology that would significantly improve the efficiency of our staff's working patterns and enable them to handle all queries and order updates as and when they occur. It was also vitally important that we increase our use of mobile communications without significantly increasing our spend," says Chris Sutcliffe, Group Finance Director, LTT Vending. "During our move from paper to radio to email, our target has always been the same: instant access to corporate data using a scalable and secure system."

Benefits

10% increase in productivity

Zero increase in mobile spend

Increased responsiveness

Improved client relationships

The Solution

LTT Vending decided the way to go was to mobilise its existing Vendman customer relationship (CRM) system for use in the field by developing a bespoke mobile application. After reviewing the mobile platforms available on the market, it selected the BlackBerry® solution because of the built-in security, ease of use and streamlined mobile application deployment.

Previously the company had been using standard mobile handsets with no mobile data access and PDAs with manual email retrieval. It conducted a cost/benefit analysis and found it could save money by moving to a group service plan from its existing carrier, that provides an allowance of minutes, text and data services to share across a number of users.

LTT Vending deployed the BlackBerry solution with the mobile CRM application to 120 BlackBerry® smartphones on BlackBerry® Enterprise Server. In addition to email, calendar and voice calling, the solution lets the company use Google Maps to track the location of mobile staff.

Realising that the BlackBerry solution would require staff to change working practices and learn to use new technology, the company chose a "soft" approach to implementation. At first, two or three BlackBerry smartphones were issued to staff at each of the depots and each new user was trained. They found the smartphones: "easy to use and they could get to work enjoying the benefits of mobile working right away," says Sutcliffe. This initial positive response got the ball rolling. "We began to receive more requests for smartphones and found they proved very popular." Today LTT Vending has 120 BlackBerry smartphone users, including merchandisers, technicians and sales people.

The Benefits

The BlackBerry solution provides the instant access to corporate data, security and scalability we were looking for," says Sutcliffe. The BlackBerry solution has improved productivity for merchandisers and technicians by making them more flexible. Daily visits to the depots to pick up job schedules are a thing of the past and field staff has access to their daily schedule. If a merchandiser discovers a machine is out of order or a customer calls to reschedule a visit, a service request is entered into the CRM system and attributed to a technician's diary automatically. Orders for new supplies are sent to the depots, and technicians can report back in real-time.

"Our operators are now able to receive data about the machines in their territory in real time and they can now reschedule visits more easily. We have calculated that they are saving over two hours a week of lost time with the BlackBerry solution, which equates to a 10% increase in productivity," notes Sutcliffe.

The BlackBerry solution has also given LTT Vending a commercial advantage over its competitors. "It seems that the use of BlackBerry smartphones is pretty new in our industry and this has helped in winning new business. Prospective clients like to know we are responsive to their needs and we have managed to win business thanks to the BlackBerry solution. We have also been able to get a deal signed as a result of our salesman having access to his emails. This particular salesman was leaving a pitch and checked his emails on his BlackBerry smartphone while in the car park. He emailed over revised quotes and the prospective client asked him to return: within five minutes the deal was signed," notes Sutcliffe.

www.blackberry.co.uk/casestudies

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