



Town council accelerates business processes and contributes to environmental objectives with BlackBerry solution

Clichy La Garenne is a town within the northwest old city gates of Paris that is home to 58,000 citizens, a thriving business community and the headquarters of several large multi-national corporations. The town Council is made up of 45 elected individuals and 1,700 employees who provide a full range of municipal services. Several councillors are members of the Council's Executive Committee, with each member overseeing a Council department. In addition to being elected officials, all the councillors have their own professional activities.

The Challenge

After the most recent Council election, the mayor wanted to make it easier for councillors to perform their municipal duties and make good on his election pledge of reducing the Council's environmental impact. Because most of the councillors have day jobs it was "difficult for them to manage their Council agenda and email in addition to their existing work," says Guillaume Ors, Clichy La Garenne's IT Director. Communications between town hall and the councillors was slow and time-consuming. Although the problem had been clearly identified, Ors encountered widespread acceptance of the situation when he was hired, saying, "They considered it a problem, but thought it was inevitable."

The Solution

Ors thought the answer to the problem could be mobile email. The town Council was already using Microsoft® Exchange, providing councillors with remote access to their calendars and email via the web. But since many of them didn't work in an office setting this solution had obvious limits.

Ors began by surveying the market. "We immediately saw that a BlackBerry® solution was probably the best answer to our needs. The BlackBerry® smartphones are much more ergonomic than their rivals and the software is much faster," says Ors, "and our network operator SFR made us a very competitive offer."

Benefits

Increased responsiveness

Simplified management of schedules

Improved communications

Helps reduce carbon footprint

But before rolling out the BlackBerry solution, Ors had to make sure it met his criteria for security and productivity. "We were given guarantees from independent organisations that the BlackBerry solution would meet our requirements for confidentiality," says Ors, who then organised a one-month trial with five users, including the mayor and councillor responsible for IT. The trial demonstrated a "huge increase in email responsiveness and scheduling flexibility," according to Ors.

In May 2008, Ors and his team installed BlackBerry® Enterprise Server for Microsoft Exchange and began deploying the BlackBerry solution to the councillors and the mayor's cabinet staff – a total of 50 BlackBerry smartphones. The devices are used for voice, email, calendar, and secure web access (via the BlackBerry Enterprise Server) and each new user is given a 15-minute lesson to get them started. Several BlackBerry smartphone users have also activated the GPS navigation feature. "The users are very satisfied with the BlackBerry smartphone. Some of them are so taken with it they can't live without it," says Ors.

The Benefits

The BlackBerry solution has improved communications within the Council by making the councillors more responsive. "Now, for example, when I send an email to the councillor in charge of my department, I get an answer within the hour, if not within minutes," says Ors. Before the BlackBerry solution Ors would often have to wait until the next day to receive a response.

The BlackBerry solution has also simplified the management of the councillors' agendas. "It's made a huge difference. Prior to the BlackBerry solution most of the councillors would print out their schedules. Now they don't have to," says Ors. He and his team also developed a new function that allows a BlackBerry smartphone user to view and manage two diaries on the same device. This feature is used most notably by the mayor's cabinet director, who needs access to both his and the mayor's diary.

The deployment of the BlackBerry solution contributes to the Council's "Agenda 21" sustainable development initiative, one of the aims of which is to reduce the carbon footprint and waste generated by the Council's activities. "The BlackBerry solution plays an important role in this plan," says Ors, who adds that the savings in terms of paper consumption, time and CO2 generated by the BlackBerry solution more than justify the modest investment. "And it hasn't added to the IT department's workload," adds Ors.

Finally, the Council continues to expand the BlackBerry solution, with the ongoing support of the mayor, who is a strong backer of new technology. "When he saw how much more efficient everyone had become thanks to BlackBerry, he asked that we purchase 30 more units for the Council's department managers," concludes Ors.

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Clichy La Garenne's
IT Director