



South African supply chain firm improves productivity and opens door to unified communications with BlackBerry solution

Established in 1986, Super Group is a leading South African supply chain management company. It provides services covering the movement and storage of raw materials, just-in-time inventory and finished goods from the point of origin to the point of consumption.

The Challenge

Planning and managing Super Group's range of services involves coordination and collaboration with suppliers, intermediaries, service providers and customers. These services are the responsibility of the company's executive team and managers, whose primary means of communication has shifted over the years from a traditional phone and fax system to email.

According to Justin Cowie, IT Support Engineer at Super Group, the lack of mobile email was having an adverse effect on project management and individual productivity. Time away from the office was preventing the managers from responding to email quickly. They were also spending a lot of time going back to the office to check email. One solution the company considered was to give the managers laptops with 3G cards, but they needed a device that would not add extra weight, and the IT department wanted a more cost effective solution to avoid additional expenses that 3G cards could incur. Super Group had also tried to implement a variety of mobile email solutions over the years, but none of them met these needs, They wanted a solution that had a lightweight device; offered ease of use, reliability, stability and security; and was cost-efficient.

Email wasn't the only communications challenge Cowie faced. Time away from the office was hurting overall responsiveness. Employees needed to be able to communicate with their managers who were often out of the office. Customers also found they were playing phone tag with executives. So Cowie decided that whatever mobile email solution he picked would have to set the stage for a move to integrated communications to improve internal communications and customer response times.

Benefits

Improved communications

Greater productivity

Time and travel savings

Integration with unified communications

The Solution

Since Super Group wanted more than just email, it decided to trial a BlackBerry® solution using BlackBerry® Enterprise Server for Microsoft® Exchange, which would also give them wireless access for synchronising contacts and calendar and provide instant messaging (IM) as well. The trial was undertaken among a small group of mobile users, consisting mainly of IT technicians who spend most of their day working at Super Group's different locations.

"We found the test to be quite a success," says Cowie. In early 2008, Super Group began deploying BlackBerry® smartphones to its executives and key IT and sales managers, a total group of 45 users with a mix of BlackBerry smartphone models.

The Benefits

"Adoption was fast and enthusiastic," says Cowie, who adds that some of the simplest features have been the most popular. "The users love the speed of BlackBerry push email and the fact that they can read HTML email with the formatting intact and can access the corporate directory from their BlackBerry smartphones," explains Cowie. "They also love being able to add a new contact on their smartphone and see it on their computer when they go back to their desk."

The reliability of the BlackBerry solution has also been a plus for users and the IT department alike. According to Cowie, the solution requires minimal management and service stability is excellent. With this in mind, Cowie says, "productivity has really improved. The users feel that mobility is so much easier. They don't have to bother with a laptop and a 3G card or stop by the office to access email. That's a huge time saving that lets them spend more time with customers and more strategic projects."

Cowie says that having BlackBerry Enterprise Server gives him great back office control. "We prefer to do things in house. For example, BlackBerry Enterprise Server has enabled us to deploy S/MIME encrypted email to our BlackBerry users." The built-in security also makes it easy for Cowie to implement security policies and wipe the data on a smartphone should it go missing.

Future Plans

In the coming months, Super Group will deploy the BlackBerry® Client for Microsoft® Office Communications Server (OCS), which will provide the features and functionality of the desktop Microsoft Office Communicator on the smartphones. Amongst other features, users will be able to set their presence status, view the status of their contacts, exchange text messages and initiate voice communications with "click to call" – all from their BlackBerry smartphones. "Thanks to the BlackBerry solution, we will enable mobile users to engage in immediate, interactive communications with all of Super Group's Microsoft OCS users," concludes Cowie.

www.blackberry.co.uk/casestudies

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Justin Cowie
IT Support Engineer
at Super Group