

TBS deploys the fastest ever field mobility solution.



The Background

ATEC is a subsidiary of Eaga Partnership Limited. Eaga Partnership is an employee-owned partnership and a social enterprise i.e. a business trading for a social purpose rather than just for profit. Since 1991, ATEC has helped more than 7 million disadvantaged households in the UK. ATEC's team visits homes to carry out doorstep data capture for public safety issues such as fire risk assessments.



The Need

Having recently won a contract for the West Midlands Fire & Rescue, ATEC wanted to remove the need for paperwork and the associated administration back at the office, where staff had to re-key survey information onto its Oracle database before work could be assigned to an engineer. They also wanted to reduce the time delay between data capture and installation work, which was often several weeks.

T-Mobile identified that ATEC's requirements could be achieved by deploying a field mobility system – and recommended TBS as the best company to provide the solution.

The Solution

The solution that TBS created for ATEC involved running its TaskMaster® technology on handheld computers provided by T-Mobile (who also supplied the airtime). This would enable ATEC's surveyors to communicate audit information back to the office wirelessly and in real time. This information could then be automatically downloaded onto the Oracle system immediately without any re-keying. This would save time and administration resource whilst allowing for swift allocation of engineering resource.

The Schedule

The tight timescales of the fire risk assessment contract completed on behalf of West Midlands Fire & Rescue required a high-speed roll out to 40 ATEC surveyors. The schedule started with a meeting between TBS and ATEC on 14th December 2005,

which included a discussion of how they went about their work. ATEC provided the fire risk assessment information, which they wanted to collect on the handheld computers, rather than the traditional paper based system. TBS then created an electronic version of this form in TaskMaster® using the unique configuration tool, TM Studio, in less than 2 days.

Minor changes were identified, made and approved by December 23rd. After the Christmas break on January 4th, three members of ATEC training team spent half a day with a TBS trainer who showed them how to train their surveyors in the use of TaskMaster®. TaskMaster® is intuitive to use, so requires a minimum of training. Using the easy-to-follow reference sheet that TBS provided, ATEC staff trained all the users, configured all the handheld computers for them and went live with the solution on January 9th 2006.

The Technology

Due to the short timescales, ATEC did not have time to buy, configure and install its own IT infrastructure, so TBS agreed to host the system.

ATEC was provided with VPN access to this service so it can pick up returned XML files created from the handheld computers and view the data via TM Monitor. ATEC's IT team created their own XML reader to extract the relevant data from the files.

Chris Grant, Director of Field Operations of ATEC said: "This is an important step forward for us. TBS's exciting technology has enabled us to streamline efficiency and enhance our cost-effectiveness. The project is already proving to be a great success."



The Benefits

Reduced Paperwork

A TEC has been able to virtually eliminate the need for paperwork in the field. Now, when its 40 surveyors complete a series of fire audits, they don't have bundles of paper forms to carry around, which could potentially get misplaced, or become illegible.

Increasing Efficiency and Productivity

A huge amount of administration has now become unnecessary – including the re-keying of data, which took time and inevitably had the potential for errors through possible misinterpretation. The data that is entered by the surveyors is sent back to the Head Office wirelessly over the T-Mobile GPRS network and automatically updates the Oracle database. This has reduced the need to expand the administration function by saving over 50 hours processing time per week.

Speed

The original paper-based system required hard copies of surveys to be posted to surveyors, completed on the doorstep, then sent back to the office for processing. The postal delays alone could be five working days. Time is now saved by issuing survey information to the handheld computer in real time.

Productivity

The easier data collection method has resulted in faster collection of information and a 15% increase in surveys completed per surveyor day.

Enhanced Customer Service

A TEC can now respond to customers' needs for fire safety improvements a lot faster, providing peace of mind to families. Speed really can make a difference – as it did for one single mother with three children. A risk assessment was carried out by A TEC at her home and, as a result of that, a fire alarm was fitted just two days later. Unfortunately, three days after that, there was a fire at the home. Happily, everyone was saved but according to the fire officer, without a fire alarm, there could well have been casualties.

Easy To Use

The simplicity of the TaskMaster® solution proved itself at an early stage as A TEC members of staff were able to quickly understand how to use the devices. The software prompts the surveyors for information to ensure that all relevant sections of a survey are covered before allowing it to be concluded. This reduces human error and ensures a standard format for data collection, allowing easier report generation.



Flexibility

Even not having a host server didn't prove to be a barrier to the implementation of a field mobility solution. At TBS, such is their knowledge and experience, that they can create a complete field mobility solution to suit any organisation.

Steve Reynolds, Managing Director of TBS, commented: "Once again, our ground-breaking TaskMaster solution proved how flexible it is and, with our fantastic team, we were able to achieve the tight timescales. These timescales also meant that A TEC didn't have time to buy their own servers, so we were delighted to host the system too."

Future-Proof Technology

Based on the current positive results, A TEC is planning to incorporate TaskMaster® technology in future contracts to improve efficiency and speed of data capture.

TASKMASTER®:

The Way Forward

The TaskMaster® solution adapts to your ways of working without compromise, which, in turn, can help to control work flow, facilitate a huge reduction in operating costs, improve efficiency, improve customer satisfaction and increase the professional service in the field. To find out more, contact TBS today.

Benefits At a Glance

- 15% increase in surveys completed
- Host server not necessary
- Eliminated paperwork in the field
- No duplication of effort
- Information is always up to date
- Much less office-based administration
- Faster processing of information
- Enhanced customer service
- Easy to use
- Platform for future contracts

TaskMaster is a registered trademark of Technological Business Solutions Ltd.

For more information

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