



Northgate Case Study

Serious About Service

Northgate Information Solutions is a leading systems and solutions company, focused on both public sector and commercial organizations. Northgate contracts for large-scale systems design, build, and run projects that include software, services, and support.

As part of its total lifecycle management commitment, Northgate has a rapidly expanding systems support business with over 130 engineers based out of six regional centers across the United Kingdom. Annually, Northgate supports over 5,000 users within its 1,200 customer base.

Challenge

The Northgate service management team was under continuous pressure to deliver revenue growth and activity quotas with the same powerful engineer force, while not compromising performance. Northgate management team desired to improve its field service efficiency and effectiveness, to increase customer satisfaction and capitalize on a rising number of new business opportunities.

Furthermore, some of Northgate's larger customers were increasing their demands by requesting more information in real time about how Northgate was servicing their equipment. After conducting several internal initiatives to improve business operations, the Northgate management team agreed that they needed an internal operations adjustment to catapult the company forward.

"We were looking to extend our in-house Service Management System to the engineers in the field," said Robyn Tolley, Chief Operating Officer for Northgate.

"Our aim was to maximize the productivity of our field workforce and enable us to more effectively manage our increasing volume of work.

The team decided to invest in ViryaNet to build on their existing call centre and service management system. After interviewing several suppliers, the Northgate team refined their requirements to enhance their dispatch and workforce management capabilities as well as to supply their engineers with onsite job information and instructions by using mobile technology.

Solution

To achieve their business objectives, Northgate chose to implement ViryaNet's solution, which has resulted in substantial cost savings, enhanced field service effectiveness and increased revenue opportunities from both existing and new customers.

The ViryaNet solution allows dispatch controllers to plan and manage assigned tasks with engineers in the field, and communicate work information to and from engineers who are equipped with mobile-enabled laptops. "Our business was growing, and we needed to change the way we managed our service business to take on additional contracts," stated Peter Thornton, UK Field Service Manager.

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Our business was growing, and it became apparent that we needed to change the way we managed and operated our service business in order to take on additional contracts," Peter Thornton, UK Field Service Manager.

“We had been looking seriously at how IT systems could support our service business, and Aspective took the time to understand our business processes and demonstrate how they could meet our requirements.”

Process

The Northgate management team acquired ViryaNet products through the ViryaNet strategic partner Aspective, who is a reseller of ViryaNet products. Aspective, provided Northgate with a complete solution, including detailed requirements definition, design, build, and implementation services.

The application is managed from within Aspective’s purpose-designed infrastructure, which allows Northgate to take advantage of a contractually binding Service Level Agreement (SLA) that covers performance, quality, and availability, as well as sharing the cost of using O2’s service to provide the mobile network connectivity. Engineers are provided Toshiba Laptops.

The system has replaced the time-consuming process of manual paperwork and basic mobile phones.

Value

Implementing a mobile workforce management solution has delivered a number of interrelated benefits that has improved efficiency, increased throughput, and reduced costs associated with providing effective service in the field.

Northgate’s central control team can now dynamically allocate jobs to engineers in the field as the day’s events unfold, maximizing time efficiency and raising customer service.

Also, Northgate engineers are now afforded access to real-time information about job parameters, which enables them to respond more efficiently. They, therefore, reduce revisits, thus contributing to greater productivity and cost savings.

Engineers now also have access to parts and technical data on their laptops, and can update logistics systems while out of the office, shortening the timeframe for responding to customer needs.

Real-time visibility of engineers’ activities as they processes work orders facilitates better management decision-making and job prioritization. This results in improved customer satisfaction based on a higher level of confidence in the quality of service Northgate can provide.

Results

“The impact that Aspective’s solution has made to our business has been dramatic. We have much better visibility of what is happening in the field...our customers also are telling us that they have noticed a significant improvement in the quality of our service to them.”

“I can walk into our dispatch center, and with one glance at the dispatch screen, see how our work is progressing. Previously, it was not always easy to know what was going on, but now we have an audit trail for each job from allocation, through acknowledgement, to arrival onsite and then completion,” said Peter Thornton.

The ViryaNet mobile workforce management solution has resulted in Northgate providing superior service to its customers. Thornton explains, “We had a call from one of our customers who normally receives regular updates on the status of their service visits. They were calling to tell us that they had noticed a significant improvement in the quality of job progress data. The combination of ViryaNet technology and Aspective services has provided us a quality mobile workforce management system that has met our objectives, and we would not hesitate to select the same solution if given the choice again.”