NDL Mobile App Case Study

# Mobile working enhancing efficiency and productivity for housing teams



Places to live. Space to grow.

West Kent Housing Association had successfully implemented an out-of-hours asbestos warning system for its responsive repairs team using MX, NDL's Mobile Application Platform. It has now moved on to a more comprehensive mobile working project, which includes repairs requests, job scheduling, asbestos alerts and gas certification, all integrated seamlessly with its back-office systems. As a result, it is making significant cost savings as well as improving efficiency, productivity and management information.

## The Challenge

West Kent Housing Association manages an estate of over 6,000 properties. One legal requirement it faces is to notify all field technicians of the presence of asbestos in a property. During working hours, this was provided by the central call centre along with a job ticket for the repair request. However, there was no practical way of doing this out of hours, and it was not feasible to print out the entire asbestos register as this would have meant giving each technician a document 12-inches thick.

Instead, West Kent selected MX, NDL's Mobile Application Platform, and developed an application which enabled technicians to check for asbestos and other alerts on properties via their BlackBerry handsets outside of normal office hours.

MX is a software toolkit and corporate server platform which allows users to design, deploy and manage multiple bespoke and secure mobile applications across different types of devices. Using these applications, mobile workers can operate on or offline, taking information from back-office systems with them and updating it from the field.

The asbestos project proved very successful and provided the platform for more extensive mobile working. The key aims for

### **Key Benefits**

Significant cost savings Improved productivity Reduced paper and fuel costs Less data re-keying Better management information

The biggest advantage is that the engineers don't have to read or record anything on paper. They are able to log much more than they used to, which leads to greater accountability and appreciation of the work they do. Once we implement the next stage, which will include automated parts ordering via the handsets, this will bring even more benefits.

Gavin Childs, Systems Analyst/ Developer, West Kent Housing Association this extended programme were 'visibility and mobility': to provide more accurate data on service activity and performance, and to deliver schedules and enable data entry for the workforce on mobile handsets, reducing the need for them to return to the office.

# **The Solution**

West Kent decided to extend the MX application further to encompass the new scheduling system. However, its experience with the asbestos application indicated that it needed different devices with a more appropriate user interface, so it decided to change to 10-inch Panasonic tablets running on the Android operating system.

Now, the 25 operatives receive their jobs for the day on their tablets, and also all asbestos information for each property. They are able to update asbestos information while on site and enter details for issuing or refusing CP12 gas certificates. They also update job information and close jobs off before going on to the next appointment.

The tablets are integrated with the back-office Capita OpenHousing, Capita OpenContractor and Xmbrace Opti-time back-office systems. The operatives enter all relevant details about the job while on site: they no longer have to fill out paper records which would then have been entered manually into the back-office systems - sometimes weeks later - by administration staff. They are also able to enter critical details of waste generated, including European waste codes, making the management of this much more effective.

MX is saving paper and saving time, while our back-office systems more accurately reflect the current situation. In short, it's taken us a significant way towards achieving our vision of 'visibility and mobility.'

> Gavin Childs, Systems Analyst/Developer West Kent Housing Association

For more information about NDL's Digital Transformation Suite;

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MX Product Mobile Apps

MX is very powerful and straightforward to work with. Previously everything was paperbased and wouldn't then be entered into the central system for a few weeks. Now there is no need for operatives to come to the office unless they want to: they can do all the administration associated with their jobs while out on site and central systems are immediately updated.

Gavin Childs, Systems Analyst/Developer West Kent Housing Association

### The Benefits

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The mobile working scheme has generated widespread benefits, and these will increase as the project develops:

- Back-office administration costs have been reduced through eliminating double data entry; this has enabled a restructuring of the administration team and more efficient use of resources
- Waste management is much more efficient: for example, a recent request for a report on waste generated in the past six months took two minutes to produce; previously this would have needed manual searching through reams of paper
- Fuel costs have been reduced through more efficient job allocation and less need for the operatives to return to the office
- Paper has been reduced by at least 60,000 sheets a year
- Fewer data processing errors are made through automation of data entry
- As the system beds in, it is expected that there will be productivity increases through more efficient job allocation, with on average an extra half a job per day per technician. In addition, the system will enable better performance management, with improved understanding of job costs and complications

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