

Gencor – customer success story

FingertipWare's has developed and deployed an enterprise mobile business automation solution for Gencor, a farmer directed artificial insemination cooperative, located in South-western Ontario that provides livestock genetics to agricultural customers in Southern and Northern Ontario. Their mobile workforce meets with over 12,000 clients each year to inseminate over 290,000 cows and deliver semen and farm products to dairymen who breed their own cows.

Background

Gencor's existing SUN/Oracle database application required a primarily paper-based process for the company's 80 field service technicians, 8 field sales representatives and 6 dispatchers. This system was highly cumbersome, time-consuming and fraught with redundancies.

Working with mobile software solutions provider FingertipWare, Gencor set about creating a solution that would mobilize their existing database application and alleviate the field representatives of this time intensive and paper-based process. Their new mobile software solution needed to provide their mobile workforce with off-line and real-time mobilization of their existing database.

Situation

Gencor dispatchers receive approximately 1,000 customer calls for service per day. The dispatchers assess the calls for services required and then allocate them to field technicians and sales representatives based on farmer, product or other special notes. Previously, the dispatchers would handwrite workorders for allocation among the mobile workforce. Field representatives (technicians and sales reps) would call in twice each morning, to receive their workorders. This process alone could take up to 2 hours for all field representatives to get all the necessary information on all of their work orders for the day.

The field representative would then go out to the farmer, perform the service, dispense any products, and handwrite a breeding receipt and/or invoice.

The information on these manually transmitted forms would then have to be entered into a web browser at the end of the day to be updated to the SUN/Oracle database. With approximately 1,000 clients a day, requiring a set of 3 handwritten forms each, the Gencor mobile workforce was generating approximately 3,000 handwritten forms each day, with three layers of redundant information.

Solution

FingertipWare provided Gencor with a mobile software solution that mobilized their existing database directly to the UT Starcom PPC-6600 handheld device working off of the Bell Mobility networks. This new solution allowed their mobile workforce to manage the database from the field and provided them with the ability to create and update sales or service orders anytime, anywhere!

Now, dispatchers receive customer calls, take their information and simply click a dispatch button to distribute workorders to the field representatives. These workorders are placed in a secure server holding location and are sent to the field employees when they synchronize their PPC-6600s by simply pushing a synch button. When the synch function is completed, new workorder information is sent out to the field and completed sales or service information is updated to the database. The need for handwritten forms and redundant data entry is eliminated and the administrative process is now completely automated.

Field representatives are reporting a great deal of satisfaction with the new Gencor Mobile solution. They have less paperwork to do, spend less time on the phone getting workorders, and enjoy providing customers with on-the-spot printed receipts that they can actually read – a valuable tool for their customers who will in turn utilize the receipts to register their animals.

In addition, Gencor is reporting positive feedback from their customers and find that they are also very intrigued with the new Gencor Mobile solution. This is important to Gencor who prides itself on capturing customer mind share and customer loyalty. As Ed Kloosterboer notes, “The data coming in real time, allows our customers to make decisions in real time. This affords them the opportunity to make day by day decisions on matters such as progeny proof that result in real and measurable savings.” For Gencor, the new mobile solution not only maximizes field efficiency, but also shows its customers that they are being proactive about effectively capturing and maintaining their data.

Details

Previously, Gencor had attempted to resolve their data mobilization issues by providing their field representatives with portable notebooks and a web application portal. However, this proved to be an unsuccessful solution because the notebooks were ineffective out in the field. According to Michael Flynn, CEO/CTO of FingertipWare, “the Gencor field representatives found their notebooks would break, have difficulty connecting and not do well with weather conditions out in the field.”

Thus, FingertipWare set out to create a stand alone application solution for Gencor that would operate on a more field-friendly handheld device. In order to do this, they rewrote Gencor’s entire SUN/Oracle application onto Microsoft Visual C++ Mobile edition and developed desktop applications that run on servers and Web

services with Microsoft Visual Studio.NET.

The new Gencor Mobility Solution had to provide field representatives with mobile access to all client records including district performance tables, inventory detail, complete financial histories, and have the ability to send information from the handheld device to the server in order to synchronize and update records in real time.

After much consideration of the existing handheld devices available on the market, Gencor and FingertipWare chose the UTStarcom PPC-6600 handheld device for its new mobile solution. “The steel body, wicked screen, graphics quality, 128 MB of RAM, and built-in 400 MHz processor made the PPC-6600 one very attractive device for our purposes, said Michael Flynn.

UTStarcom’s PPC-6600 handheld was then paired with the Bell Mobility networks. “It was the most capable combination on the market, “ says Tim Grimes, President of FingertipWare Inc., “Gencor chose the Bell Mobility network because of its coverage and data speeds. “

With the new Gencor Mobile solution on the UTStarcom PPC-6600, each Gencor field representative is treated like a warehouse with its own unique inventory and products and does the following:

- Keeps track of inventory for each technician and sales representative.
- Provides Bill of Sale or Invoice for products or services.
- Provides Breeding receipts with all specifics of livestock

ancestry (important for farmers who need to registers new calves with national database).

- Has Bluetooth battery powered printer to print breeding receipts, invoices, etc.
- Provides wireless synchronization of all data from the field.
- Maintains each bulls or cows history on database.
- Provides work log and mileage log tracking with automated submission into Gencor.
- Accounts for complex awards program and allows for minor modifications to program (major modifications need to be performed by FingertipWare).

Benefits

The new Gencor Mobile solution not only mobilized and automated the Gencor field process, it also proved to be easy to use for field representatives. Tim Grimes elaborates, “The Gencor Mobile” solution software is a very graphical and intuitive, without complex data entry, it is designed to be a tap-n-go software.”

Gencor’s Mobility Manager, Ed Kloosterboer, has individually trained members of the mobile workforce in one-on-one training sessions that last about 30 to 60 minutes. According to Ed, he simply “walks the field representative through their processes on the software and then they are up and running with device.”

