

The 'Origin' of success for remote software: the M3+

The increasing versatility of mobile, hand held computing devices has made a huge difference to companies that are looking for more accurate and effective ways of gathering data in the field. Innovative applications such as iJob2 – an integrated job management system developed by Origin Technical Business Services – depends on the availability of suitable hardware. Origin opted for the Mobile Compia M3+ PDA, provided by a specialist consultancy, Spirit Data Capture Limited.



Origin Technical Business Services specializes in developing sophisticated remote software solutions. These are designed to streamline and enhance existing business processes in the field. As such, they need to be quick to implement, easy to use and must add real value to a business. One of the keys to their effectiveness lies in the suitability of the hand held hardware devices used. ▶

Case Study

Origin's suite of remote applications includes ijob2 (integrated job management). This aims to provide a powerful link between an organisation's office base and its remote workforce. It enables users to create and dispatch specific job information, and to receive the requested data directly back into their office system. A series of automatically generated screens guides the user as they collect the information (which could include signatures, barcode scans and digital photographs).

Origin needed a sturdy PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) so that the ijob2 software could be used in demanding field environments by utilities and engineering companies. Managing Director, Simon Matthews, says: "We started looking for a suitable hand held device that would cost under £1,000. It needed to be rugged, with an IP rating of at least 54, and to have a Windows Mobile or Windows CE operating system.

"We also needed a GPRS (General Packet Radio Service) capability and options that would include a digital camera, rather than an imager, and a barcode reader. We also wanted a supplier that could provide in-house support for our development team as well as access to the manufacturer's development team when required."

Origin had been working closely with Spirit Data Capture, an independent company that specialises in mobile data capture solutions, for two or three years. Spirit recommended the Mobile Compia M3+. This is a state-of-the-art PDA which is rugged (with an impressive IP64 rating) but also very slim and light. It is packed with the latest technology, with options such as an 802.11 b/g (WLAN) radio; GSM/GPRS; Bluetooth; and a 1.3 megapixel colour camera.

The M3+ is available with either Windows Mobile or Windows CE. It boasts impressive processing speeds and a large colour TFT LCD display. Data can be entered easily via the touch screen or the external keypad. The device also incorporates a laser bar

code scanner that can read virtually all linear and PDF bar codes.

Simon Matthews observes: "Previously, we had been unable to find anything that matched all of our requirements. However, the M3+ successfully met our very exacting criteria. When we tested it, we were delighted to find that the unit also performed well." Origin bought eight M3+ devices for the initial roll-out, followed by a further 30 units at a later stage.

Spirit provided powerful support, answering queries from Origin's development team as they sought to port the ijob2 software to the M3+ devices. Simon continues: "Their support is also excellent. It was vital that we could carry out developments on the unit without incurring delays or high

costs due to poor support. Spirit's help enabled us to port the ijob2 platform to the M3+ very quickly, and to ensure that it was stable."

He adds: "The Mobile Compia 3+ is an excellent device. It offers very good value when compared with other options available in the marketplace in terms of both its price and its specifications. Currently, I would say that the M3+ is probably 20% cheaper than its main rivals in a like-for-like comparison.

"Overall, this is a very good, all-round unit that has proved to be very stable for development purposes. The Software Development Kit has been easy to use and is fully featured, which has allowed us to achieve the level of functionality we required.

"Our engineers have also been pleased with the units, and only one training session was needed. The whole experience has been enhanced up by Spirit's excellent response to our needs, particularly when we have had a development question or have needed to liaise with the manufacturer."



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Managing Director

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