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PH JONES GAINS EXTRA SPIRIT FROM THE MC35!

Specialist advice can make all the difference to an application, as PH Jones discovered recently when it needed to breathe new life into a project that would enable its field engineers to capture data electronically. The company turned to an independent consultancy, Spirit Data Capture Limited, who recommended the Motorola MC35 Enterprise Digital Assistant. Since installing the new hand held devices, PH Jones has seen significant benefits in terms of efficiency, cost savings and productivity.

PH Jones Limited is a specialist heating, plumbing, property maintenance and utilities company, providing services to over 250,000 properties nationwide. In the 1990s, the company expanded into the social housing market and general property refurbishment, followed later by the utilities market.

Two years ago, the firm's Social Housing Maintenance department embarked upon a new project to automate the collection of data by its gas service and repair engineers. Previously, the engineers had to fill in paperwork manually – a labour-intensive task that also caused time wastage from waiting for the data to be returned and problems with lost forms etc.

The department therefore decided to streamline its operations by installing hand held data collection devices. Unfortunately, the initial approach ran into difficulties due to problems with deadlines and stock availability. The company therefore decided to completely revise its approach and to use new hardware.

Derek Corbishley, Director of Social Housing Maintenance at PH Jones, takes up the story: “We needed a supplier we could trust, so we approached Spirit Data Capture. We had heard about them previously through an advert in a trade magazine. As they were fairly close by, we contacted them, and their Managing Director, Ebbie Khadem, had given us some helpful advice. Therefore, when we were revisiting possible suppliers, Spirit seemed to be an obvious choice.”

He continues: “We wanted to find a device that was reliable, compact and fairly durable – and that was also competitively priced. The previous models we had bought were very expensive. As our devices are used in the field, they can easily get damaged, so we wanted something that wouldn’t cost the earth if we needed a replacement. It also needed to have Bluetooth capabilities.”

Spirit recommended the Motorola MC35 Enterprise Digital Assistant – a small hand held unit that is easy to carry and use, and incorporates mobile voice and data communications, image capture and bar code scanning facilities. Its built-in durability helps to deliver a reliable performance in everyday use. The device also offered a range of wireless capabilities.

Derek remarks: “The MC35 does everything that we want it to do. It’s compact, semi-rugged, and has all the features we require – including barcode scanning and wireless facilities such as Bluetooth. As an added bonus, it can double up as the engineer’s mobile phone.”

The new devices are being used by the company’s gas engineers when they service and repair appliances for Local Authorities. Landlords have a legal requirement to have an annual safety check of their appliances. The engineer has a list of the appliances on a CP12 form, and uses the MC35 to fill in the data. A copy of the form can then be produced on a Bluetooth printer so that it can be given to the tenant, and the data is also fed back to PH Jones’ bespoke computer system.

The engineers receive each of their jobs via the Motorola devices. Pilot, the specialist software used to manage this system – and to provide the electronic CP12 forms – was developed by PH Jones. It recently won the Servicing and Maintenance Initiative of the Year Award from H&V News.

Derek Corbishley says: “The MC35s are invaluable as they are used to record all of the data. Because this is done in real time, the system knows when each job is being carried out and when it has been completed. This enables us to

schedule further jobs if the engineer has sufficient capacity. We aren't using the barcode capability at the moment, but we plan to use it in the future."

He adds: "We have had very few issues with the Motorola MC35s and we intend to roll them out nationwide in the future. The engineers had initial concerns about learning how to operate the new devices, and were worried it would take longer to do each job, but they have found that quite the opposite is true. Now that they've used them, they are very happy with them and have realised how efficient they are.

"The new devices have brought us some great cost savings – especially as they can also be used as mobile phones for the engineers. They have also increased our efficiency. We can also schedule work more effectively, so the MC35s have helped to boost our productivity."

He concludes: "I can't fault Spirit's service. They are very helpful and efficient and we always get the answers we need to any queries we have. We fully intend to use Spirit as our main supplier for our future hand held hardware requirements."

Notes for Editors: Spirit Data Capture is based in Preston Brook, Cheshire. The company is an independent mobile computing and data capture house, with an in-depth knowledge of the latest wireless and mobile computing technologies which boost productivity and profitability.

Spirit's capabilities include software application development, mobile computing technology (e.g. rugged mobile computers), wireless network implementations, maintenance and other services. Its extensive client base includes a diverse array of

organisations in the utilities, field service, transport and logistics, healthcare, government and manufacturing sectors.

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