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*power to you*



# Mobile workforce management at Bristol Water cuts admin costs by 25 per cent



Whatever the time, morning, noon or night, we all expect instant access to quality drinking water.

It's a challenge faced each and every day by Bristol Water, which operates a complex network of water sources, mains, reservoirs, pumping stations and treatment works to deliver water to more than one million homes and businesses in south west England.

Keeping the water running requires a masterpiece of planning, engineering and monitoring – and the numbers are impressive. Bristol Water supplies around 300 million litres of drinking-quality water daily, pumping it through 6,600 kilometres of pipes to its domestic and commercial customers.

It covers a territory of 2,400 square kilometres, taking in the historic city of Bristol and surrounding towns, villages and countryside in Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire.

The company has also won high scores from the water services regulator Ofwat for its excellent customer service. But in an industry requiring high levels of investment to maintain and improve essential infrastructure, and deliver even better services, there is a constant drive to reduce costs and improve efficiencies, across all departments.

## Ripe for innovation

One area of its operations identified as ripe for innovation involved the activities of its teams of field workers.

Historically these men and women relied on manual processes to plan, schedule and complete their day-to-day tasks. Over a year, this created mountains of paperwork – more than one million individual pieces – and many overheads, not least the expense of supplying and transporting the paper and the associated business cost of time-consuming data processing and filing in cabinets.

A review showed that many of the management processes for field workers could be automated. Recalls Matt Stephenson, Project Manager at Bristol Water: "A manual process of administration just couldn't continue. Besides the cost implications, it didn't meet our commitment to sustainability. With all the paper we were using and fuel consumed transporting documents to our offices, we weren't being very eco-friendly."

However, introducing new automated systems in a company with well established working practices was going to be a challenge. "It was crucial that we found a supplier who really understood our business challenges and had experience of establishing a mobile workforce management system," adds Stephenson.

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### Impressive results

Working with Vodafone to bring in a mobile workforce management solution has produced impressive results for Bristol Water. No fewer than 80 paper forms have been eliminated and replaced with a fully mobile application. Work scheduling and basic management tasks are automated, increasing productivity by up to 40 per cent in some roles with administration now 25 per cent more efficient.

After Bristol Water approached GE Energy to run a pilot programme of its Field Force Automation (FFA) system, the company recommended Vodafone as its preferred implementation partner. “The pilot programme went extremely well and we received the go ahead for a company-wide deployment. Vodafone won the tender for the full implementation, having already impressed us in the way it understood our business needs,” Stephenson explains.

The customer-facing network department – which is responsible for all aspects of the distribution of water was the first to make the switch, followed six months later by other departments dealing with water treatment and sampling.

Instead of using pen and paper, employees now have laptops delivering resource planning, work scheduling and process management applications and GPS location services across the Vodafone network. The FFA solution also integrates securely with the company’s SAP enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM) systems and its Laboratory Information Management System.

Administrators can now track order acceptance, current status and estimated time for completion in real-time.

Vodafone played a key role in transitioning employees to the new system. “We are a 162-year-old company with some long-established systems and ways of working so getting employees to buy in was vital,” says Stephenson.

A series of workshops and training sessions were held before the go-live date, which showed everyone how their working day would be improved. Meanwhile regular communications keep staff up-to-date with the project’s progress.

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### Significant benefits

- Bristol Water has greatly improved efficiency, streamlining more than 30 manual processes and eliminating 80 paper forms
- Better scheduling ensures better productivity with staff now fitting 50 per cent more water meters a day, for example
- With management data transferred directly to back office systems over the Vodafone network, administration is now 20 to 25 per cent more efficient
- 2.3 million pieces of paper were saved within the first nine months of deployment, reducing the company’s impact on the environment
- Secure connectivity ensures data is transferred reliably, in real time, across the Vodafone network
- Flexible technology allows Bristol Water to configure the system for different job roles and can now react more easily to changing business requirements
- Employees are more responsive to customer needs by having access to the right data in the right place, at the right time
- The company has a scalable management platform to extend to other work groups, such as contractors
- In Vodafone, Bristol Water says it has found a trusted partner to manage its continued success through IT innovation

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