



Product: Itronix Q-100 and Q-200

Application: Field Sales

Itronix Solution:

- Rugged handheld that is water, dust, temperature, and shock resistant.
- User friendly with a well-laid out keyboard and screen visible under all conditions.
- Microsoft Pocket PC operating system
- Long battery life for all-day working.

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Case Study:

Littlewoods Shop Direct Group

OVERVIEW:

Founded in 1924, Littlewoods is a privately-owned business purchased by LW Investments Limited from the Moores family in November 2002. Littlewoods Home Shopping is the company's catalogue and online operation selling over 40,000 products.

PROBLEM: To provide representatives with a rugged mobile computing platform

Littlewoods Home Shopping has a nationwide team of 280 representatives who call door-to-door as well as visiting high streets and shopping centres. Details of prospective new customers used to be written onto paper forms, collated by team leaders and sent to head office. After address verification and credit checks, Littlewoods catalogues with personalised order forms were despatched.

There were a number of problems. Collecting customer details on paper in all weathers sometimes led to illegible information. Delays in returning and processing forms often meant that it was more than seven working days before the catalogue was delivered. This resulted in a low rate of conversion from prospect to customer as well as high administration costs.

Littlewoods Home Shopping wanted to increase efficiency, improve customer conversion rates, reduce operational costs and drive up sales revenues. Previous efforts to introduce handheld mobile computing had been ruled out as possible systems proved too bulky or expensive.

"We had a look at automating our processes before but there were no suitable handheld terminals. We'd bided our time until something came along that we felt was appropriate," said Ian Ormrod, Field Marketing Business Development Manager, Littlewoods Shop Direct Group.

ITRONIX SOLUTION: The company wanted a reliable rugged handheld device that was water, dust, temperature, and shock resistant. It also had to be user friendly with a well-laid out keyboard and a screen visible under all conditions. Other requirements included Microsoft's Pocket PC operating system, Navara Forms for data collection and AFD's Pocket Postcode address verification software. All data was to be transmitted wirelessly using GPRS. Four different devices were given a nine-month trial to test reliability, processing power, battery life and wireless connectivity.

The Itronix GoBook Q-100 ultra-rugged handheld PC proved the most suitable solution. Itronix consultants helped Littlewoods and Navara Software during the trial to ensure thorough testing. Users found that the Q-100 was more comfortable in day-long use along with a screen that was visible even in bright sunshine.

Itronix has now provided 280 GPRS-enabled Q-100 handheld computers to Littlewoods Home Shopping along with a comprehensive three-year service and support programme. The applications software is stored on compact flash cards, allowing for easy updates.

Using a touch screen, drop-down menus and the keyboard, prospective customer details are now captured by Littlewood's representatives using Navara forms software. AFD Pocket Postcode checks the address as it's entered. All details - including a

signature - are then transmitted wirelessly in a standard format to head office where credit checks are automatically triggered and catalogues despatched.

Novice computer users have found the Q-100 particularly easy to adapt to. Working in all weathers, it has proved resistant to rain, temperature and dust. And despite being dropped onto floors, pavements and even down a flight of concrete stairs, the Q-100s have gone on working faultlessly. A long battery life has proved ideal for all-day working while offline storage holds captured data when experiencing poor network coverage. A lock-down facility protects customer information when not in use.

"The representatives received the Q-100 well and have been very pleased with the results. We have rolled it out territory by territory to make sure that our systems can deal with the data traffic," said Ormrod.

Before equipping new representatives with the Q-100, Itronix pre-loads the software applications and installs the Vodafone SIM card. The fully-tested device is then sent to a Littlewoods Field Manager who puts new users through a four-hour training course. The representative can then immediately switch from paper forms to the Q-100.

RESULTS: Information now flows from customer to credit vetting in a matter of hours with catalogues being despatched within a day. This has led to a significant increase in conversions from sales prospect to ordering customer with the time taken for the first order being cut. The administration cost per new customer has also been reduced.

Having met and exceeded its original objectives, and due to the on going success of the Q-100 deployment Shop Direct Group is now in the process of rolling out a further 150 of the latest version hand held from Itronix, the Q-200, to representatives covering their other catalogue titles. Working with both Itronix and Navara the company has ensured that both the Q-100 and Q-200 devices will co-exist with the common applications and back office systems. Further to this, Shop Direct now intends to develop the package and work with third parties in order to satisfy their recruitment needs too!

The combined Littlewoods Shop Direct Field Sales Team is proposing to move more functionality to the Q-100's and Q-200's such as online customer acceptance which will allow catalogues to be handed to prospective customers and take orders at the same time. It's also thinking about using the handheld to show product images and descriptions.

"The Q-100 has proved to be very reliable in use and the level of support from Itronix is everything that we could have hoped for. We have very quickly developed a good working relationship with Itronix. I don't have any problems in recommending them to other businesses," said Ormrod.