

CASE STUDY – Mobile Computing

AIG

Pen Computers create a mobile, electronic office



"When we started this, it was – and still is, for the most part – unique. We hit lots of technical and operational roadblocks. Each time we came back, the people at Fujitsu were extremely helpful. I give those guys ringing endorsements," says Charlie Turri, Associate Director, Information Technology.

American General

American General, based in Nashville, has over 200 offices and nearly 5000 agents, and writes life insurance policies for more than 4 million customers across the country. Early in 1994, the company recognised the need to replace the paper-based, manual transfer of account data from field agents to headquarters. The existing system was slow, redundant, and seriously prone to error. "What we were looking for," says senior vice president of Information Technology Ed McClure, "was a mobile, electronic office."

Solution

"We determined tablet PCs, rather than laptops because we wanted something as close as possible to what the agents were used to," says McClure. Fujitsu's mobile device supports a full range of agent activities including collections, new business, customer service, and financial transactions. When doing collections, the agent works from a route list loaded onto the Stylistic pen tablet PC. As the agent collects premiums from customers on the list, data is entered into the pen tablet PC with a stylus. The system printer generates detailed receipts for the policyholders and stores the transactions right on the pen tablet PC. At the end of the day, the agent runs a closeout sequence that compiles and pre-processes the day's accumulated data. That night, each of the 5000 pen tablet PCs in the field automatically dials into the central office mainframe and uploads its accumulated data.

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Bringing Information Home

The home office system is designed to further streamline the whole process. As the information from pen tablet PCs across the country reaches the mainframe, a "Work distribution tool" routes the various transactions to the appropriate departmental systems.

"Since the system's inception, more than 30% of life policies have been issued with no human intervention whatsoever, aside from initial data entry by the field agent."

The Benefits

Automation has made a significant difference throughout the American General operations. "It eliminates duplicate data entry and math errors," say McClure. "Forms are filled out correctly, and even those applications that have to be looked at by underwriters have already been checked and edited by the system, so the underwriter doesn't have to review the whole thing. The system tells them what's wrong."

In addition to the obvious impact at headquarters, the system eliminates a lot of administrative chores for the field agents as well. McClure cites the example of daily accounting for cash collections. "We do it all for them on the pen tablet PC," he says. "Now they have more time for other things, including selling."

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