

“Mobile technology has the potential to greatly improve the effectiveness of the WA Police.”

Sergeant Ross Adam - Team Leader, Regional Operations Group, Western Australia Police Service



Customer’s Challenge

Policing an area as vast as Western Australia is a testing business. So to extend the long arm of the law in the world’s geographically largest law enforcement jurisdiction, the Western Australia Police Service is always looking to new technology for a helping hand.

Searching for details about particular individuals is a fundamental part of police work, but WA Police’s existing capability to conduct name and vehicle searches is limited. If a suspect is in custody, the supervising officer or detective can conduct searches using a PC connected to the WA Police mainframe, which hosts the database covering people and vehicles of interest.

However, when the highway patrol pulls over a vehicle for speeding or dangerous driving, officers also need to be able to check if the car is stolen and whether any of the occupants are wanted for other offences. Such on-the-spot checks must be conducted by radio, and only two radio channels are dedicated to responding to queries called in from anywhere in Western Australia.

“The current system probably only allows WA Police to follow through on 5 to 10 per cent of queries,” says Sergeant Ross Adam, a Team Leader in the WA Police Regional Operations Group. *“The net is not as tight as we would like it to be. It’s very difficult for one person to handle the number of enquiries generated by police officers and support staff. Checks are often queued 10-deep during busy times.”*

The Fujitsu Solution

“We saw this as an ideal opportunity to judge for ourselves whether handheld computers and mobile communications were mature enough for our needs,” comments Sgt Adam. *“If the pilot worked, we expected to save a lot of time and increase our effectiveness by conducting a higher volume of checks.”*

The pilot was first conceived in late 2003 when consultants from Fujitsu and Microsoft approached WA Police with the idea of building a prototype application for mobile name and vehicle searches.

After finding strong internal support within the force, the pilot was given the green light. Fujitsu and Microsoft worked together to develop the core application, while the police bought six off-the-shelf PocketPC hand-held computers that were connected to Telstra’s high-speed General Packet Radio Service (GPRS) mobile network.

SUMMARY OF KEY FACTS

Organisation:

Western Australia Police Service

Service/s Delivered:

A mobile solution using used hand-held computers and high-speed wireless communications to provide officers on patrol with direct access to databases holding information about people and vehicles.

Key Metrics:

- Polices more than 900,000 square miles and protects 1.9 million people
- Employs nearly 6,000 people distributed across 162 police stations

Benefits:

- Fujitsu and Microsoft’s .NET solution was found to be easy to use, secure, fast and well suited to high-volume police operations.
- A three-week pilot proved spectacularly successful, with the application enabling police to catch criminals on the run and identify suspended drivers.
- Query response times were generally between 5 and 15 seconds – much faster than radio-based enquiries.

CASE STUDY

WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE SERVICE

The application allows police to enter name and vehicle searches on their hand-held devices. Queries are sent via a secure GPRS connection to WA Police headquarters. The solution was developed using Visual C# .NET and consists of a .NET Compact Framework Smart Client application running on the hand-held device and calling Web services running on a Windows 2003 Server host. The Web service module communicates with the police mainframe and returns the results to the requesting officer – all typically within 15 seconds.

Following the positive reaction to the pilot, WA Police is continuing to examine the most appropriate hand-held computing devices. A number of application enhancements were also identified during testing.

The concept is expected to receive a boost following the recent appointment of Western Australia's new Police Commissioner, Karl O'Callaghan, who announced the 'Frontline First' policy with the objective of prioritising operational activities and equipping WA Police with the best technology to support frontline police work.

"The pilot was so successful that we hope the provision of mobile capability will be catapulted to high priority," adds Sgt Adam. "Mobile technology has the potential to greatly improve the effectiveness of the WA Police."

Benefits to our Customer

Compared to the existing voice radio queries, the technology boosted the number of queries conducted during routine police operations, leading to a dramatic improvement in identification of people who were wanted by police for matters as serious as armed robbery and drug trafficking.

The pilot proved spectacularly successful. On one night, WA Police used the technology to conduct blanket searches on the drivers of all vehicles pulled over by a random breath testing patrol. The search facility enabled the police to catch a number of suspended drivers and, more dramatically, an armed robber on the run. It also helped identify a convicted drug dealer, resulting in a vehicle search that found trafficable quantities of drugs.

"Having a search application at our fingertips was very rewarding operationally, especially in a high-volume situation like the 'booze bus'," says Sgt Adam. "The computer-based searches were much faster than radio enquiries – a matter of seconds, rather than minutes – and the fact that there were no queues encouraged officers to conduct more searches. It is an exceptional tool for police work."

Officers found the application to be intuitive and easy to use, ensuring training requirements would be minimal. Both the application and the GPRS data network performed well during the pilot, which encouraged further usage.

Sgt Adam continues, *"The pilot was a huge success: everyone who used the application endorsed it. The hand-held computers were considered conducive to the tactical need for frontline police to work through an interview-based technique."*

Our Approach

A three-week pilot was conducted and the test phase involved more than 30 frontline officers operating across three shifts with a 21-hour daily testing window (7am to 4am). The test team was drawn from the Regional Operations Group. This unit operates as a roving back-up across the Perth metropolitan area, helping local officers with incidents that require extra resources. Its diverse ambit made Regional Operations Group an ideal candidate to test the prototype system in a wide variety of police work.

Our Expertise

In 30 years of designing, implementing and managing complex business systems, Fujitsu has amassed a wealth of experience in developing mobile workplace solutions that reduce costs, improve productivity and customer services and deliver a compelling return on investment.

Fujitsu's mobile services for the Mobile Professional and Mobile Field Force have been developed according to the TRIOLE and Sense and Respond® approaches. Based on reuse and design for service, TRIOLE means that Fujitsu provides reliable, robust and repeatable solutions that can be deployed quickly and cost-effectively. The Sense and Respond approach enables Fujitsu to deliver continual service improvements, in real-time, at the client interface.

Fujitsu offers a full-spectrum managed mobile service, delivered securely and in real-time. It is device and network independent, easy to use, and offered at a predictable monthly charge.

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Contact us on +44 (0) 870 242 7998 or
askfujitsu@uk.fujitsu.com or visit uk.fujitsu.com