

Panasonic



TOUGHBOOK

PowerSystems

Field workers for PowerSystems, part of the ScottishPower Group, have a tough job locating faults in the power network covering vast areas of Scotland, Wales and North West England. Now, thanks to the work of the company's recent Mobile Workforce Management Project, they are armed with an effective tool to combat power failures and get supplies restored.

Case Study

ToughBook technology helps beat the black-out

The Operations Business Unit of PowerSystems is responsible for the maintenance of the electrical network across Southern and Central Scotland, Merseyside, Cheshire and North Wales. Engineers involved in supply restoration activity need access to detailed diagrams showing the relevant electrical infrastructure, so they can pinpoint the location of power lines and carry out repairs quickly and safely.

Before field technology became available, field staff either had to rely on paper records kept within their vehicles or were forced to travel to depot offices to print off current diagrams. So they could be sure of receiving the latest, accurate information on site, it was necessary to equip the workforce with a mobile communications solution. Early in 2001, the Mobile Workforce Management Project was launched to assess the efficiency of the field technology in use and to investigate the alternative solutions available.

"As our aim was to get the best equipment for delivering large volumes of data in the field as well as being able to stand up to extreme outdoor conditions, we carried out a full environmental scan of all available technology. This involved external consultancy and a series of site reference visits to UK utilities." Matt Corr, Senior Business Consultant, PowerSystems

Switching on to new technology

With its 30GB hard disk and GPRS capability the ToughBook CF28 offered the ideal solution to cope with both current and future field workloads. The first ToughBooks were delivered in September 2001 enabling pilot rollouts in Glasgow and Liverpool to begin on schedule. Loaded with PowerSystems' existing GIS viewing tool – Map Access 32 – the units also carry other software including MS MapPoint to assist with navigation, MS Outlook for remote e-mail access and MS Office for accessing standard applications.





A surge in team morale

Improvements in the efficiency of field operations have been noticeable since introducing ToughBook technology. Not only can field staff save time and expense by travelling directly to site, the dependence on out-of-date paper maps has been eradicated with subsequent risk reduction and improved safety levels. In addition, user feedback has revealed a high level of satisfaction with the new system and a significant improvement in the morale and self-esteem of everyone involved.

"The solution has moved field working within PowerSystems into a new culture in terms of use of technology. It also positions the business well for further improvement in this area."

David Rutherford, General Manager, Operations Business, PowerSystems.

High-level support from Panasonic

While Panasonic provided effective technical assistance throughout the implementation, PowerSystems took advantage of their Bronze support package providing a year's Accidental Damage cover and 3 years' Return to Base warranty.

Considerable savings were also made on the Phase 2 delivery in December 2001, through Panasonic's Gold Build offering. Under this agreement, Panasonic keeps a master image of applications and data to apply to future purchases, minimising the effort required by the customer on delivery of the new devices.

Panasonic has also proved to live up to its promise of rapid replacement.

"The only fault occurring during the implementation of the project was a cracked screen, following a vehicle collision. The device was uplifted and returned in perfect working order within 5 days, well within the 8-day commitment offered under the Bronze package." Matt Corr.

No training required

ToughBook's ease of use has been put to the test in unusual circumstances with PowerSystems. During an emergency over Christmas and New Year 2001, senior managers found they could use the ToughBooks in real-life fault conditions with minimal training, and were surprised by the facilities the solution offered. On another occasion, an experienced

engineer arrived on site to review a fault only to find that the jointer had already accessed network information via ToughBook and had a plan of action in place.

A future assured

Due to the success of the project, the original order for 100 was increased to 330 by the end of March 2002, allowing comprehensive coverage across the Operations Business unit of PowerSystems.

"The project has been perceived as a tremendous success within the business by management and users alike - a real 'win win' situation. This is due to excellent support from key technology partners such as Panasonic, ICL and SAIC utilities and a high level of input and acceptance from the user population throughout the project." David Rutherford.

PowerSystems is now progressing the next phase of their Mobile Workforce programme in an attempt to build on the success of the existing platform and prioritise solution enhancements for their operational field staff.



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ideas for life