



Microsoft Windows Mobile Customer Solution Case Study



Overview

Country or Region: United Kingdom
Industry: Nonprofit

Customer Profile

Charitable organisation Thera Trust was set up to support adults with a learning disability. The organisation aims to give adults a say in the support they receive and how it's delivered.

Business Situation

Thera Trust is highly staff-intensive, with around 700 employees and 60 team leaders widely dispersed across the U.K., working primarily in the community. As a result, communication across the organization was a challenge.

Solution

The organisation engaged Microsoft® partner EACS to roll out O2 Xda II devices running Windows Mobile® powered Pocket PC to its 60 team leaders.

Benefits

- Any time, anywhere communications for managers
- Faster delivery of regulatory information
- Additional advice and support through Internet
- High collaboration and sense of community
- Cost effective deployment



Care Organisation Enhances Specialised Services to Community With Mobile Software

“Employees can share common interests or pass on advice about a particular issue, giving them a sense of belonging and community, helping them to feel part of a greater organisation and support network.”

Simon Conway, Commercial Director, Thera Trust

U.K.-based charitable organisation Thera Trust supports adults with a learning disability and aims to give them not only a leading role in the support they receive and how it's delivered, but also in the direction and management of the organisation. Many of Thera Trust's employees are dispersed across the U.K., and communicating effectively was a challenge. Thera Trust engaged Microsoft® partner EACS to roll out O2 Xda II devices running Windows Mobile® powered Pocket PC to its 60 staff team leaders. Users can now access their e-mail, calendar, and contacts any time from any location. Managers can communicate with their colleagues quickly and efficiently. Regulations and best-practice information can be distributed to all managers quickly and efficiently, and Internet access offers additional advice and support, helping to enhance the way in which support is delivered.

Microsoft®

Situation

Thera Trust is a charitable organisation, established in 1998. It was set up to support adults with learning disabilities, but with a view to giving these individuals a say, not only in the support they receive, but how it's delivered, and how the company itself is directed and managed.

Simon Conway, Commercial Director, Thera Trust, says: "This is an ambitious agenda as many individuals need a lot of support in their day-to-day lives. However, it's central to our existence that they play a part in how the company is run. Our Service Director, an executive post on the Board of Directors, who is responsible for quality assurance and liaising with the people we support, has a learning disability. He brings a unique perspective to how the board runs the company, ensuring we maintain our focus on support issues."

With administrative offices in Grantham in the U.K., Thera Trust's services extend from the East Midlands, to East Anglia, and Cumbria. The organisation is highly staff-intensive, with around 700 employees and 60 team leaders widely dispersed across these locations. As a result, communications between managers was a challenge.

Conway says: "Managers and their teams are an integral part of the lives of the people they support in the community or in their homes. They don't have the luxury of time to travel in to an office on a daily basis to access e-mail or the Internet."

As a support organisation, Thera Trust is regulated by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. "We carry out sensitive work with very vulnerable people, so these regulations are important. Policy issues and guidance are critical to the way our managers and staff work. We needed to be able to deliver new

guidelines and policies to managers, sometimes at short notice," says Conway.

The organisation was keen to provide mobile devices to team leaders to help them communicate with one another and receive crucial information quickly. "It didn't make sense to give them cumbersome laptops or set up workstations in offices because the nature and pattern of their work doesn't allow it," says Conway.

Solution

Thera Trust examined the market for a simple personal digital assistant (PDA) device, which team leaders could use to communicate by text message or by e-mail. The organisation engaged Microsoft® partner EACS to roll out a solution based on Windows Mobile® software.

"It proved to be a challenge to get an IT partner who could support us with a degree of understanding about what we do. EACS had that ability to understand the challenges that our managers and staff face," says Conway.

Thera Trust worked with EACS to deploy O2 Xda II devices running Windows Mobile powered Pocket PC to its 60 team leaders. The device gives them access to e-mail and the Internet. Conway says: "It can also be used as a mobile phone that fits in their pocket or purse, which is ideal for the work they do."

He continues: "A main reason we chose the solution was integration. Thera Trust has grown rapidly, and we were in the process of introducing [the] Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 [communication and collaboration server], which offers seamless mobile access to Microsoft Pocket Outlook® [messaging and collaboration] functionality. In addition, we already had a contract with O2 for the organisation's mobile phones and were able

to use its upgrade plan to get the Xda II devices.”

Using the devices, users access e-mail, calendar, and contacts in real time from any location. Groups of local team leaders need to manage on-call arrangements amongst themselves. Using the device, they can share Microsoft Pocket Word or Microsoft Pocket Excel® spreadsheet software documents for planning rotas or on-call schedules. Thera Trust can also distribute policy updates, corporate communications, and practical guidance to managers in the field electronically.

EACS rolled out the system in early 2005 and continues to provide technical expertise and support. Tony Sanders, Technical Director, EACS, says: “The technology is reliable and highly-suited to this community of users. We developed a specific training course for social care staff who hadn’t used [the Microsoft] Windows® [operating system] before.”

Conway says: “The historical development of support services to people with a learning disability means that some managers may have very little experience of IT. The quality of the training has been very important to us.”

Benefits

Boosting Support Levels

Users can now keep in touch from anywhere, collaborate, and share documents without having to rely on telephone calls or intermittent access to corporate communications. As a result, they can do their jobs more efficiently and provide a more informed level of support to the people they’re caring for.

“In this staff-intensive environment, keeping in touch is vital. The ability to communicate through e-mail easily is invaluable, especially for managers who don’t have access to a workstation,” says Conway.

The devices can be carried in pockets or purses, yet they offer users a high degree of functionality. Team leaders access the Internet on the devices where they can refer to access relevant Web sites for additional guidance. “There are a number of professional organisations that produce all sorts of information and guidance in our sector,” says Conway. “Managers can find information and keep up with professional best practices.”

Even the simplest characteristics of the technology help enhance the overall quality of support and care users can offer, such as the built-in camera. “Managers can take photographs to show to the people they’re supporting. They help them to remember the places they’ve visited, for example,” says Conway.

Improved Collaboration and Communication

By sharing local management information quickly and easily, all managers now have rotas and good practice information at their fingertips. Previously, this information was shared by telephone calls or posted to staff in the mail. Policy issues and practical guidance are now deployed to all managers in a single e-mail, ensuring the organisation effectively complies with care regulations.

Says Conway: “We’ve recently had an annual inspection by our regulators that involved bringing together a lot of managers and staff across the organisation. The solution has made coordinating meetings like that far easier.”

Bev Payne, Team Leader, Thera Trust, says: “The devices also help with communicating with other agencies, plus the relatives of people we support who live some distance away.”

Support for Employees

Conway says that enhanced communications and information access gives users a greater sense of community. “While there are opportunities for local managers to get together, it’s more of a challenge to gather managers from across the entire organisation. These devices have brought together individuals who may be working at opposite ends of the country,” he says.

“Employees can share common interests or pass on advice about a particular issue, giving them a sense of belonging and community, helping them to feel part of a greater organisation and support network,” he adds.

Some managers work with administrative staff members who make amends to calendar information and contacts from the office. Wireless connectivity of the devices ensures that these updates appear on the user’s device in real time.

Easy-to-Use Technology

Despite the fact that many users were unfamiliar with computers, they have adapted rapidly to the devices. Sanders says: “We expected it to be a challenge to train people who weren’t familiar with using laptops to become competent users of Word, Outlook, and Excel, or a handheld device. We trained them from scratch in three and a half hours, which speaks volumes about how well the software has been designed. It is also a credit to our partner, EACS, and its ability to deliver a comprehensive training programme to a wide range of abilities.”

Cost-Effective Deployment

As a charitable organisation, Thera Trust needed to minimise deployment costs. “The solution was extraordinarily cost effective,” says Conway.

“We had already decided to invest in new technology as part of our move to new

offices. Extending that investment by adding additional software to support Windows Mobile powered devices was a minor process. If you offset those low costs against the extensive benefits we’ve had, there is no question that it has been a worthwhile project.”

Future Potential

Conway says: “As hardware capabilities develop, we expect managers to have access to our corporate intranet, including access to our human resources and finance systems, further enabling their access to critical management information.”

For More Information

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www.microsoft.com

For more information about EACS products and services, visit the Web site at:

www.eacs.com

For more information about Thera Trust products and services, visit the Web site at:

www.thera.co.uk

Microsoft Windows Mobile

Windows Mobile brings the power of the Windows operating system to mobile devices, helping businesses and their mobile employees stay connected while on the go. Windows Mobile runs mobile versions of Microsoft programs, including Microsoft Office Outlook Mobile, Internet Explorer Mobile, Pocket MSN®, Windows Media® Player Mobile, and Microsoft Office Word Mobile, PowerPoint® Mobile, and Excel Mobile. With Windows Mobile, information workers get powerful software combined with the familiarity of Windows. Combined with available service plans and connectivity options, Windows Mobile powered devices, available from 42 device makers and 68 mobile operators in 48 countries, can be used to make calls, send e-mail and instant messages, surf the Web, and access critical business information even when users are away from the office.

More information about Windows Mobile can be found at:

www.microsoft.com/windowsmobile

Software and Services

- Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- Windows Mobile powered Pocket PC

Hardware

- O2 Xda II devices

Partners

- EACS

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