

Rosser & Russell



Background

For a company that has been in business since the early 1860s, changing with the times comes naturally to Rosser & Russell Building Services. Over the past 150 years, the name Rosser & Russell has become synonymous with excellence and technical innovation within the building services industry.

Today, using the latest advances in information technology, and backed by the resources of its parent, VINCI Plc, Rosser & Russell is associated with landmark projects within the construction industry. Customers include O2 (UK) Ltd, BBC, Nationwide, Metropolitan Police and United Utilities.

Offering a range of building services from initial design and installation to maintenance throughout the life expectancy of the building, the company prides itself on delivering a premier engineering service.

Challenge

In more recent times the maintenance of buildings has become an increasingly important aspect of Rosser & Russell's business. The company offers a range of services

that include planned preventative electrical & mechanical HVAC maintenance, a full reactive call-out and repair service, five-year and annual electrical testing, disaster recovery planning and provision, security and air conditioning.

Until recently, the company's maintenance division employed a paper based system to support its nationwide, 100-strong team of mobile engineers. Customers needing assistance would contact call centres at the company's offices in London and Manchester by phone or fax. The call would be logged by the service desk and details of the enquiry would then be phoned through to a field engineer who would subsequently visit the customer site.

Engineers would then complete a work sheet, detailing the actions carried out and listing any parts that needed to be ordered. They would also complete a timesheet indicating the amount of time spent on the work. This data was posted back to the call centre, where the information was collated, checked by a supervisor and then entered into the computer system for further processing. Although this process was time-consuming, there had been no prior alternative and engineers had become used to working this way.

"As with any paper-based system, the process was prone to errors and certain delays such as postal strikes," explains Rosser & Russell's Paul Ryder, National Operations Director, Maintenance Division.

Solution

As Rosser & Russell's maintenance business grew ever more popular with customers, it became increasingly apparent that the legacy system would need to be reviewed and changed.

Not only were unacceptable delays occurring in the process of reporting job details, there was also a detrimental impact on Rosser's ability to invoice customers on time.

"The process wasn't as efficient as it could be, but most importantly it wasn't conducive to retaining the loyalty of our customers," explains Ryder. "It was affecting our image. We needed to ensure that our customers were entirely satisfied with our service, hence the decision to find an alternative, IT-based mobile communications solution." At the same time, the company was introducing Concept™ 500 from FSI (FM

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Solutions) Limited, a fully structured Facilities Management software solution that features complete contract management capability. This would enable Rosser & Russell to manage maintenance projects more effectively.

“Whatever mobile communications solution we were going to choose for our engineers, it needed to integrate seamlessly with FSI’s Concept™, which would be at the heart of our new solution,” explains Ryder.

A review of the market revealed that a number of companies could offer a mobile data solution, but Cognito Limited stood out for several reasons, among them Cognito’s understanding of Concept™ 500. Ryder explains: “What initially attracted us to Cognito was their relationship with FSI and their experience of working with and integrating their service with the Concept™ software.”

Cognito and FSI have an established and successful history of working closely together to ensure the smooth implementation of integrated SMS and managed mobile data communications solutions for their joint customers. “Cognito were also credible on the management and technical issues,” says Ryder. “Their ability to act as an integrator meant that we could keep the number of vendors that we deal with down to just two.”

Cognito’s solution was to provide Rosser & Russell’s engineers with radio enabled Personal Digital Assistants (the Siemens SX45) which operate across a national GPRS network. As well as providing the mobile units, Cognito provides a fully managed service from the messaging system and audit trail, through to single-point billing and customer services. “We currently have around 50 engineers using SX45s, each of whom is given clear task instructions and target attend/ fix times,” explains Ryder. “Our aim is to roll this out to the full team of 100 engineers in due course.”

Unlike the old paper-based system, Cognito’s managed mobile data service means that actual attend and fix times are recorded in real-time. For instance, an engineer can record on his PDA that he has arrived on site, explain the nature of the problem immediately (and order parts if necessary) and communicate that he is moving on to the next job.

This information is fed through to FSI’s Concept™, picked up by the service desk and actioned accordingly. Instead of filling out pieces of paper, engineers make use of Cognito’s Formplus, a structured, logical and user friendly environment for capturing data.

The impact of Cognito’s solution has been positive and immediate. Not only has the new system enabled Rosser & Russell to speed up the process of maintaining buildings – information is now updated the same day rather than up to two weeks later – but the division is also now far more proactive than before.

Ryder explains: “As you might expect, we are beginning to realise benefits in terms of a reduction in administration, fewer errors in processing, meeting our customer Service Level Agreements, improved cash flow and much faster communication, both internally and with our customers. On top of this, we have become far more proactive with planned maintenance calls.” In time, Rosser & Russell expect the rollout of the mobile service to all of its engineers to reduce costs substantially and enable higher productivity. And by offering a better service to customers, Rosser & Russell will benefit through an improved image, greater customer retention and further growth.

The next phase of the project for Rosser & Russell is to introduce Concept™ eSQL, FSI’s extranet system that will enable customers to securely log-on and integrate with the network. “They will be able to see for themselves, in real-time, exactly what’s happening with each task,” explains Ryder. “This is a big step forward and is part of our longer term plan to offer our customers the very best customer service.”

Exactly what type of mobile data solution Rosser & Russell will have in 150 years time remains to be seen. For now, though, Cognito’s solution is proving to be a substantial improvement over pens, paper and the occasional postal strike!

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