



SUCCESS STORY

National Laundry Operator Turns To Mobile Automation And Pocket PCs for Field Service

WEB SERVICE COMPANY IS ONE OF THE LARGEST COIN LAUNDRY OPERATORS IN THE UNITED STATES. TO HELP ITS FIELD REPRESENTATIVES KEEP BETTER TABS ON INVENTORY, THE COMPANY DEPLOYED WINDOWS POWERED POCKET PCS RUNNING MOBILE LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE FROM MOBILE AUTOMATION.

OVERVIEW

Web Service Company is the largest privately owned coin laundry operator in the United States, with more than half a million washers and dryers operating in facilities that include apartment and condo buildings, universities, military bases, “mom-and-pop” laundries, and other locations. The company has nearly 1,200 employees working out of Web Service branches in 25 states.

SITUATION

The company’s operations have traditionally been managed by Web Service staff from its headquarters in Redondo Beach, California. As branch operations increased in size and scope, Web Service began looking for a IT solution that could address a major issue—efficiently collecting and storing the inventory of machines and parts in the field, while giving mobile service technicians fast access to that information so they can provide better service.

SOLUTION

Web Service decided to work with Mobile Automation, a Microsoft® Mobility Partner Advisory Council member, to deploy wirelessly enabled Windows® Powered Pocket PCs to its mobile field representatives. The deployment provides Web Service employees with faster, more efficient access to mission critical information files. It has also led to a drop in the number of calls to the Web Service help desk and necessary training hours because of Mobile Automation’s wireless remote control feature for the Pocket PCs, “LiveSupport.”



Solution Overview

INDUSTRY

Commercial cleaning

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Web Service Company is the largest privately held coin laundry operator in the United States, with branches in 25 states supporting about 500,000 washers and dryers.

SITUATION

To support its branch offices in their maintenance and inventory efforts, Web Service wanted to deploy a mobile solution for tracking assets including washers, dryers, and parts.

SOLUTION

The company deployed Windows Powered Pocket PCs and Mobile Lifecycle Management software from Mobile Automation that simplifies the process of Pocket PC inventory data collection and its transmission back to corporate headquarters. The Mobile Automation software also allows for remote diagnostics and software distribution to Pocket PC devices as well as similar functionality for laptop and desktop PCs.

MICROSOFT SOFTWARE USED

Microsoft® Windows® Handheld PC 2002

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Mobile Automation's LiveSupport software is helping the Web Service Company manage the IT resources for a company with operations around the United States.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about Microsoft products or services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (800) 563-9048. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. More information via the World Wide Web is available at the following Web sites:

- Microsoft Pocket PC Enterprise Page
www.microsoft.com/mobile/enterprise/default.asp
- Mobile Automation
www.mobileautomation.com
- Web Service Company
www.weblaundry.com

"Mobile Automation's software let us create a means of automatically sending data gathered by field representatives from their Pocket PCs to their local PCs, and then back to our headquarters," says Matt Winn, IT operations manager at the Web Service Company headquarters. "With a scanner attached to the Pocket PC, they are able to scan bar codes on inventory and get the information back to our enterprise database with virtually no intervention required on the part of the user. We can also keep better track of the money deposited and removed from each of the machines, which leads to a big reduction in labor expenses typically needed to manually track the money. The greatly improved data gathering process improves the amount and the accuracy of the information we have on our inventory in the field. This improved process, and more reliable data, helps us run our business more efficiently."

WIRELESS REMOTE CONTROL, SOFTWARE DISTRIBUTION PROVIDES COMPELLING BENEFITS

LiveSupport, the wireless remote control functionality of the Mobile Automation software, was a major selling point in helping Web Service select a mobile management system. Web Service Company is also using wireless remote control as a training tool to help with support issues on the devices. In addition, LiveSupport's wireless capabilities allows the Web Service IT staff to take control of a remote user's Pocket PC or desktop PC in hard-to-reach locations. The remote session can be initiated from a PC in the company headquarters or at a branch office, so that an administrator can support the device regardless of the connection type or its location.

Web Service Company can also use Mobile Automation's Mobile Lifecycle Management software for tracking its IT assets in the field, and can use it to distribute software to both laptop and desktop systems as well as to the Pocket PC units in the field. As the system evolves, the company is also planning on pushing more enterprise data to the Pocket PC devices.

Doug Neal, CEO of Mobile Automation, says these features of Mobile Automation's software fit well with the Microsoft Windows platform. Companies that are indifferent as to the brand of device are leaning more toward Pocket PCs once they see the enterprise capabilities that can be deployed on Pocket PC devices.

CUSTOMERS MOVING TO POCKET PCS

"In the beginning phases of projects, a lot of our customers really don't care about whether they use Windows or Palm or other mobile devices—they are more interested in the functionality than in the platform," said Doug Neal. "But Microsoft has done a great job with the Pocket PC and has delivered an enterprise-scale mobile platform. With Pocket PC, a company can also find a form factor that will fit their specific business needs. We support Palms as well, but we're now spending the majority of our time adding features for Pocket PCs because of the perception among our customers that the Windows powered devices can better deliver what they need for mobile computing.

"Microsoft has done a great job with the Pocket PC and has delivered an enterprise-scale mobile platform that is capable of so much more than the other mobile operating systems."

DOUG NEAL • CEO • MOBILE AUTOMATION, INC.

