

Case study



BT service and delivery operation transforms parts delivery using Skillweb Track and Trace solution

Background

BT systems and office services division delivers parts to 27,000 mobile engineers around the country, using a fleet of 220 trunking and delivery vehicles. The division's central hub at Magna Park in Leicester handles 24,000 order lines a day. There are also nine regional depots, plus a second large warehouse at Northallerton in North Yorkshire, which focuses on more direct fulfilment through a parcels network.

The warehouse at Magna Park features a high bay racking system with automated guided vehicles. BT also uses an inventory planning and management software and warehouse system to manage the trunk network and end-point deliveries throughout the UK and Northern Ireland.

Meeting the challenge

The team required a wide ranging supply-chain visibility and track and trace system for the parts and materials operations. The division needed to distribute parts, tools, consumables and safety and testing equipment to the BT staff who repair and maintain systems for residential and business customers. The operation is also responsible for delivering some new products into the retail market.

The Skillweb solution

Skillweb worked with the BT team to develop the system. The BT team comprised systems and supply-chain process experts, as well as people from the transport team who would manage the application on a day to day basis. The main focus of the project was the track and trace system, named TraX.

- **A complete view of the supply chain**

Skillweb developed and implemented a system that allows product to be scanned and recorded at every stage in the delivery process. The information is fed back to the centre at Magna Park, giving the organisation an overall view of the supply chain in its current state.

- **Up to the minute data capture**

At the heart of the system are Intermec handheld computers, issued to all drivers and also used at the central warehouse. Delivery details for each driver are downloaded to the terminals at the depot and sorted into the correct delivery order.

The terminals have built in barcode scanners, and the driver uses these to scan each 'event' during the delivery process. Codes may be displayed somewhere at each delivery point, so that the driver can confirm arrival by scanning a fixed location code.

- **Accurate management information**

Skillweb software at the control centre processes the information and feeds back the intelligent data into BT's own management system to close orders, record deliveries and for trend analysis.

The Benefits

- **A tighter control on deliveries**

Many of the deliveries are made on an unattended basis to locked drop-boxes at selected BT sites – one for each engineer. There are 700 sites, of which 150 are Technical Engineering Centres (TECs).

“Unmanned handover is very convenient, but we wanted additional visibility at this point,” said John Bamber, Head of systems and office services at BT. “Scanning really tightens up control and accountability.”

- **Tracking signatures easily**

Some deliveries go directly to the distribution centres of bigger retailers, and in this case handheld terminals capture signatures electronically. Similarly for deliveries to locations such as building sites, where a third party receives the items for fitting or installation.

- **Instant reports available**

The scanned data is downloaded to BT's host computer in batches when the drivers return. The handheld units also are able to send messages by GSM mobile phone or link to a wireless network.

- **Accessible planning data**

Once a trunk vehicle is loaded and despatched, detailed information on every consignment is passed to the appropriate depot supervisor for sub-distribution. The TraX system provides planners with all the information they require on the task in hand – tractor units, trailers, customers, drivers, opening hours and special instructions.

- **Focusing on customer needs**

When all driver recorded events are uploaded, the central system generates its reports. A daily scorecard reflecting performance is created for each depot, allowing managers to drill down and identify trends. The information allows BT managers to focus on service and customer needs, rather than spending time trying to track missing and lost in transit consignments.

John Bamber says that the TraX system has added a further degree of automation to their job, helping to ensure that they are supplied with the correct materials and parts at the right time.

“The project certainly involved a culture change, says Bamber. “It's hard to quantify the benefits, because so much has changed, but we feel this system has brought us up to the same level as the major third party carriers.”

Business Benefits

- More efficient tracking of consignments saves time identifying lost or missing items
- Management reports help to identify trends for efficiencies
- Automatic uploading of data reduces errors and time with data entry
- Centralised database enables overview of deliveries
- Electronic capture of signatures and data provides accurate, up to the minute record of drops

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