



SUCCESS STORY

ICEE Serves Up Better Customer Service and Internal Efficiency with Windows Mobile-based Solution, CounterMind Framework

ICEE IS A LEADING PROVIDER OF POPULAR BEVERAGES SUCH AS ICEE, SLUSH, SMOOTHIE, AND ARCTIC BLAST, AS WELL AS OTHER SNACK FOODS FOUND IN CONSUMER VENUES AND OUTLETS THROUGHOUT NORTH AMERICA. PROVIDING ON-SITE MAINTENANCE FOR ICEE MACHINES IS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE BUSINESS—BUT ONE THAT WAS GETTING BOGGED DOWN IN PAPER-BASED PROCESSES. WORKING WITH COUNTERMIND, A MICROSOFT MOBILITY PARTNER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER, ICEE INTEGRATED AN ENTERPRISE CALL CENTER APPLICATION WITH A MOBILE FIELD SERVICE SOLUTION RUNNING ON WINDOWS MOBILE-BASED DEVICES FROM SYMBOL. THE RESULT: LESS PAPERWORK, MORE PRODUCTIVITY FOR FIELD SERVICE TECHNICIANS, AND BETTER SERVICE FOR ICEE CUSTOMERS.

SITUATION

The ICEE Company makes cold carbonated beverages such as Arctic Blast, ICEE, Slush, and Smoothies, as well as snack foods that are sold throughout the United States, Mexico, and Canada in convenience and grocery stores, theaters, malls, amusement parks, and other consumer outlets. The company, a subsidiary of Pennsauken, New Jersey-based J&J Snack Foods, operates branch offices throughout the continent. Each year it sells more than 300 million ICEE drinks.

ICEE also manufactures the food service equipment used in making its drinks and employs a field service operation of about 400 technicians who provide on-site maintenance and support for the ICEE machines. About four years ago, the company created an internal call center application for handling service-related activities such as routing customer service requests and dispatching technicians. In the field, however, the ICEE service technicians relied on paper forms and cell phones to coordinate all their tasks. The company wanted to find a way to automate field activities to help service technicians be more productive, speed up billing cycles, and provide better customer service with faster responses to service requests.

SOLUTION

Working with CounterMind and Tolt Technologies—both Microsoft Mobility Partner Advisory Council members—ICEE deployed a Microsoft® Windows Mobile™-based field service automation (FSA) solution that uses ruggedized Symbol Pocket PC devices equipped with wireless modems and a tailored field service application. By early 2004, the company had deployed about 200 devices, with a full deployment goal of about 400 Pocket PCs by the end of the year. To create and integrate the mobile application and the call center applications, ICEE used CounterMind's Mobile Intelligence Platform (MIP), a framework that includes a server, messaging services, and various smart clients for mobile devices.



Solution Overview

INDUSTRY

Food and Beverage

CUSTOMER PROFILE

The ICEE Company makes cold carbonated beverages and snack foods that are distributed throughout consumer outlets in North America.

SITUATION

ICEE wanted to deploy a mobile field service solution that could minimize or eliminate paper processes and help technicians communicate more effectively with an enterprise call center application.

SOLUTION

ICEE worked with CounterMind and Tolt Technologies to create a powerful, wirelessly enabled mobile solution that integrates with ICEE's call center application.

Microsoft Mobile Solution Partner

CounterMind
Tolt Technologies

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The new automated field solution is helping ICEE do more with less by providing field technicians with tools to be more productive and provide better customer service.



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- Microsoft Windows Mobile Page
www.microsoft.com/windowsmobile
- Countermind
www.countermind.com
- ICEE
www.icee.com

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JOHN GRIFFITH • DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS • THE ICEE COMPANY

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With MIP, companies such as ICEE can easily develop or modify mobile applications targeted for specific departmental jobs such as field service work. The FSA solution created with MIP allows ICEE field technicians to communicate with the company's call center application over WWAN, WLAN, and LAN connections, and the devices support 802.11b and GPRS technology. Countermind's framework uses XML-based message services for communications between the MI Smart Client and the MI Server. Technicians can order parts, scan bar codes, close out job tickets, view new service orders, capture customer signatures, and perform other tasks whether or not they are in an area with wireless coverage.

BENEFITS

With Countermind's MIP, ICEE was able to extend its enterprise system to the field with a rapid, cost-effective development cycle. Countermind's approach carefully decouples business process from the technical plumbing. When combined with the rich application programming interface support in Windows Mobile software, the solution helps project developers easily go through multiple iterations of the mobile application without extensive recoding on each version. With more than 50 percent of the Pocket PC deployment completed, ICEE is realizing business benefits through improved technician productivity, better responsiveness to customer calls, and faster billing cycles.

STREAMLINED COMMUNICATION SPEEDS WORKFLOW

“The streamlined communications with the dispatch offices make a technician's workday simpler and more efficient,” says John Griffith, ICEE's Director of Information Systems. “Tight integration between the mobile and call center applications makes the dispatcher's job much easier. The application is all drag and drop—the dispatchers can now grab a call and drop it on a tech. That call is placed in that tech's queue, and as soon as the device synchs, the tech is able to pick up the message and take the job. Dispatchers can also reassign priorities for the techs so they can be rerouted for more urgent calls.”

Randy Starr, Countermind's Director of Technology, says the ICEE project validates Countermind's decision to develop for the Windows Mobile platform. “We've got a tremendous amount of flexibility in our product offering, which enables us to deliver a solution that fits our customer's technical, business, and cultural needs.” Starr says. “ICEE has experience with Microsoft development environments, so they'll be able to easily evolve their mobile applications.”

MOBILE SOLUTION HELPS COMPANY DO MORE WITH LESS

Griffith says ICEE already has experienced faster service times for customers, more productivity for field service technicians, and quicker turnaround time for invoicing.

“This solution allowed us to get rid of cumbersome paper-based and telephony processes that were time consuming and costly,” Griffith says. “Our technician-to-dispatcher ratio has increased, meaning there are more billable people in the field. Plus, technicians spend less time doing paperwork and more time doing service work for customers. The solution also has allowed us to get to next-day billing. This is a huge improvement over our prior paper-based system that took a minimum of two weeks between the time a job was finished and when the invoice went out.”

Griffith credits Countermind and Tolt Technologies, as well as the Windows Mobile platform, for helping the company achieve greater efficiencies.

“We are very familiar with the Windows-based environment, and the decision to go with the Windows Mobile platform was an easy one,” Griffith says. “It was a natural extension for our enterprise application—and a natural extension for our existing expertise. What we've learned in this process we can apply to other applications in our business.”