

## NATIONAL DISTRIBUTING COMPANY CASE STUDY

**Challenge:**

Provide a point-of-service tool for National Distributing Company's 1,000-person sales team to perform order entry and CRM applications while at the customer location.

**Solution:**

Using Fujitsu's pen tablet PCs and a cellular phone, NDC's sales representatives can dial up directly to the company's mainframe computer and access its Web-enabled order entry and CRM applications.

**Benefit:**

Fujitsu's pen tablet PCs provide NDC's sales representatives with up-to-the-minute data on order status, product availability and customer account status, as well as additional information, while they are face-to-face with the customer.

**Background**

National Distributing Company (NDC) is among the top three wholesale alcoholic beverage distributors in the United States. A private *Fortune* 500 company, NDC emphasizes the utilization of technology to help achieve the personal, value-added customer service needed to differentiate itself from the competition. It relies on a 1000-person sales force to stay in constant contact with the customers. While in the field, NDC's sales representatives take customer orders, monitor product reserves and inventory, perform market surveys and provide the highest level of service to ensure customer satisfaction and maintain loyalty.

**Challenge**

Previously, NDC's sales representatives carried cumbersome paper reports along with portable data collection devices that could only send orders. "With the old system, our sales force was essentially working off of week-old information," said Michael C. Carlos, chairman of the board and co-chief executive officer for NDC. "There was no easy way for them to immediately verify if a particular product was out of stock or whether the customer was on credit hold for one reason or another. They would either call the office and have a customer service representative check the computer for the information needed or they just entered the order and waited until the following day to find out if the order could be fulfilled."

NDC looked for a solution that would give its sales force up-to-the-minute information and the additional resources they required to be effective in the field. "We needed our sales reps to have easy access to current information on product availability and CRM information—everything from account status and customer-buying patterns to market data such as, what particular wines are on a restaurant's wine lists and what spirits are on the shelves behind the bar," explained Carlos. "With easy access to these resources, NDC could do a better job selling the right products to the right customers at the right time."

**Solution**

NDC enlisted the services of DBK Concepts Inc., a value-added reseller specializing in mobile computing solutions, to carefully evaluate its sales representatives' daily activities and the company's IT needs. DBK determined that NDC's sales team needed a solution that would stand up to everyday use. A durable and reliable tool was necessary, which would reduce the cost of repairing or replacing damaged units. In addition to durability, the device also needed to last the entire working day. A dead battery on the road would severely affect the quality of service the representative could provide.

But extended battery life often translates into compromised processing power. This was a compromise NDC did not want to make. With the type of applications NDC envisioned, processing power, as well as storage memory and functionality, would have to be up to par with the highest performing handheld devices available.

"We began development of a new Web-enabled order entry and CRM application, and were investigating alternatives for hardware," said Warren Newman, vice president of computer services for NDC. "Windows CE-based devices were the most attractive for a number of reasons. First, the operating system enables users to utilize the Web-based technology with Pocket Internet Explorer. Second, the devices do not have an internal hard drive or any other moving parts, making them more durable and

reliable. And third, because they have no hard drive, these devices will last a lot longer on a single charge."

One device DBK recommended caught NDC's attention—Fujitsu PC Corporation's pen tablet PC. Weighing just two pounds, this touch-screen device is specifically designed for mobile workers who need to access large, frequently updated databases remotely.

The Fujitsu computing device met all of NDC's requirements. It's reliable, powerful and can handle Web-based applications with ease. Yet it has an exceptional 10-hour battery life<sup>1</sup>. "Even on the sales representatives' longest days Fujitsu's pen tablet PC would be there for them," said Newman. After a trial period evaluating these mobile devices, he recommended NDC purchase 1,100 units for the entire sales force.

Each NDC sales representative now carries a Fujitsu pen tablet PC when visiting customers. By attaching a short cable from the pen tablet PC to a cellular phone, they can wirelessly dial directly into NDC's mainframe and send and retrieve "up to the minute" customer information from anywhere. These large HTML web pages can be easily viewed with the pen tablet PC's 8-inch display using Windows CE's Web browser.

**Benefits**

Since implementing the new automated system, NDC has seen a dramatic increase in the productivity of its sales force. With just a few taps on the pen tablet PC's touch screen, the sales representatives can quickly access up-to-the-minute information on product availability, sales history, product delivery information, merchandising data, customer account status and other CRM data while they are at the customer's location. No longer do they have to carry day-old paper reports or continually call into customer service. All the information is on the pen tablet PC and can be easily navigated.

"Our sales reps can enter orders directly into the main system, so any problems that might come up, such as a product is out of stock or a customer's on hold, can be taken care of then and there," said Jay Davis, president and co-chief executive officer for NDC. "This way, our sales reps can spend their time more effectively. There's no need for them to follow up on yesterday's problems because they have resolved them today."

In addition to order entry and customer verification, the system, running on Fujitsu's pen tablet PC, can provide other types of information. "Our Web-enabled CRM application provides us with a wealth of options for our salesforce. For instance, if a wine review applauds the virtues of one of our wines, the HTML version of this article can be sent electronically to each salesperson."

"The bottom line comes down to providing our sales force with the tools they need to do their job better and faster," explained Davis. "With Fujitsu's pen tablet PCs and our Web-enabled CRM application, they have immediate access to the information they need to provide the very best service to our valued customers."

In the next few months, NDC plans to work with DBK to take advantage of the pen tablet PCs functionality by making them email enabled. This will further enhance the system, producing a communications tool beyond order entry and CRM applications.

<sup>1</sup>Based on Handheld 3.01 ITL test results.