

ADACTUS ACHIEVES £1.5 MILLION OF EFFICIENCY SAVINGS BY ADOPTING MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

Submitted by: 1st Touch

Tuesday, 29 May 2012

Adactus Housing Group needed to adopt mobile technology when it centralised its DLO Operations. In doing so, there was a potential to increase efficiency greatly and to generate savings of up to £1m. The move turned out to be even better than expected. Not only were Adactus able to do so much more than previously but savings have now exceeded their initial target and are currently running at over £1.5m. Adactus Housing Group is a Registered Social Landlord managing over 13,000 properties across the North West of England with the majority located in Manchester, Chorley and Wigan. The group which currently has a turnover in excess of £44m is comprised of three subsidiaries: Adactus Housing Association, Beech Housing Association and Chorley Community Housing. The role of maintaining the group's housing stock falls to the Asset Management Department, which is responsible for delivering all property service functions, including: reactive and planned maintenance, gas servicing, grounds care, caretaking, void works, lettings and other related tenancy matters.

Adactus launched a three year business reengineering programme in May 2009 to make the most of the opportunities for efficiencies presented by the recent substantial growth of the Group. The programme, known as Adactus2012, was focused on six work streams. Two of these, to 'resolve more problems at first contact' and to 'create a more efficient DLO' had a great bearing on the Group's requirement for mobile technology.

As Andy Marshall Director of Asset Management at Adactus says; "The Adactus senior team set about moving from a dispersed area office based structure to a centralised operation with one main office location, a contact centre and a single integrated DLO team. The contact centre would then distribute the work to operatives who would be based at home. If managed correctly, we could see how this could potentially deliver huge efficiency savings, not least in terms of time, fuel and financial resources."

This new business structure meant a complete rethink in the way that operatives were to be managed. As Marshall notes, "Once we became centralised it just wouldn't be practicable for operatives to return to base to collect job information, materials and the like. We would need to manage them remotely. It was clear therefore that we needed a system that was capable of supporting, controlling and managing a remote workforce's activities at a distance. It was at this stage that we started looking in earnest at mobile technology."

At the time Adactus2012 was launched the 50 responsive repairs operatives in place at Adactus were as productive as they should be. Adactus realised that if they could manage the workforce better, with mobile technology in place, that there was the prospect of increasing the number of jobs per operative per day significantly. The simple mathematical equation was that if the changes facilitated the completion of just one extra job per day for fifty operatives, then over the course of a year this would be a resource saving of over £1,000,000. Adactus decided that this was a target worth aiming for.

As Marshall points out, "Once we could introduce an appropriate system for managing remote operatives, we knew this target was within reach. If we could have our operatives get in their van, in the morning,

with the right materials already on board and then be guided to their jobs electronically we knew that by simply eliminating the need to return to base, they would be able to perform at least one extra job per day. This was the major driver behind our decision to deploy mobile technology. The next job was to identify the best system available.”

It was at this stage that Adactus Housing Group commenced an exhaustive review of the market. However, that too had a learning curve. As Marshall says, “We were totally new to all this but luckily in this market we were able to proactively network with similar organisations who have trod the same path previously.

“This process led us to visit a number of organisations, amongst our peers, to see what they had chosen and more importantly whether the systems in place had lived up to what they had promised. We were exceedingly grateful to these organisations for guiding us in terms of what to look for and what to ask. A couple of the sites we visited used an interesting combination with OptiTime appointment scheduling and 1st Touch mobile workforce software and this seemed very much to offer what we needed to achieve.”

Following the initial review and subsequent presentations Adactus decided to implement OptiTime appointment scheduling coupled with 1st Touch (www.1sttouch.com). 1st Touch applications can bring significant efficiencies and productivity increases to any application where field based workers are equipped with mobile devices to provide services. 1st Touch had already won widespread acclaim in the social housing and local government markets where the software manages, supports and controls all aspects of mobile workers’ activities.

Indeed, an additional driver behind Adactus’ decision was the knowledge that 1st Touch had already developed integration with Aareon; who provide Adactus with its QL back-office Housing Management System. 1st Touch was also in partnership with Aareon. Adactus now knew that it could create a tightly integrated system combining all three products OptiTime, Aareon and 1st Touch.

Since being deployed, the new system has worked smoothly. Operatives now receive their job information electronically through the 1st Touch system. As Marshall notes, “The technology allows the call centre to schedule the repair jobs electronically in the operatives’ calendar with OptiTime arranging the appointment in the best way possible way so that the operative would then set out from home do a big circle on a dedicated route and end up back at home. 1st Touch manages all the electronic forms on the PDA and updates the system back at base once each job is completed.”

In addition, as operatives use up their on board van stock, they tick this off on their PDA and the 1st Touch software automatically places an order with the nearest Jewson for parts and materials. Adactus has an ongoing arrangement with Jewson, so the next time the operative passes by a box of parts and materials is already waiting for collection.

With the new integrated mobile systems in place, the efficiency savings have been significant. The number of jobs carried out each day increased by more than one job per day. Marshall also points to other benefits, noting; “In addition to the impressive efficiency savings we have made, there has been a growing trust between the DLO and our tenant base. As a result, we have been able to expand significantly into other areas of maintenance. This includes planned installations of kitchens and bathrooms for which

we have recently recruited more operatives.”

By integrating and deploying 1st Touch software in unison with OptiTime scheduling and existing back office systems, Adactus Housing Group exceeded their £1m savings target by over £0.5 million So pleased are Adactus with the progress made to date, they have entered their responsive repairs team for an industry award and at the time of writing have been shortlisted for Maintenance Team of the Year. Adactus knows though that the biggest winners from the introduction of mobile technology are its customers to whom the improved services levels delivered are greatly appreciated.

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About 1st Touch (www.1sttouch.com)

1st Touch, based in Southampton UK, develops a widely acclaimed range of software systems that have enabled numerous field workforce-based organisations to fully embrace mobile technology and so achieve significant savings, greater productivity and more cost-effective use of resources.

1st Touch Mobile delivers clear and unique benefits that make a real and positive impact. These include:

- Enhanced operative route planning and service delivery– better time usage and reduced fuel costs.
- Significant cost reductions for organisations because airtime is minimised and the system is always available – with or without airtime.
- Lone worker safety.
- Flexibility through simple customer control over forms creation and amendment.
- Smooth integration with multiple leading back office and other enterprise software applications, so that data is entered only once.

1st Touch has a clear focus on the public sector and in particular Local Government; where the software has already been adopted for a wide range of mobile workforce uses.

Ready to use applications for local authority organisations include: Public Buildings, Highways/Street Services, Environmental/Waste Management and Revenues and Benefits, along with Surveying , Planning Control, and Trading Standards. Together with key sectors such social housing, and care delivery, many organisations now benefit from the fast and tangible, best of breed benefits that 1st Touch mobile technology delivers across the enterprise. Users include: Powys County Council, 2010 Rotherham, Wakefield & District Housing, Homeserve, North Ayrshire Council, Philips Collection Services, Amicus Horizon, Peabody and Manchester Northwards

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