Mobile application enables timely tracking of deliveries

Since December 1999, the Scandinavian Garment Service (SGS), one of the leading logistics companies in the Nordic and Baltic region, has been using a Nokia Activ Server –based mobile application to keep its drivers and customers informed about the status of shipments. Prior to implementing the mobile solution, less than 50 % of shipments appeared on SGS's order-tracking web site on shipment day. Today 97 % of all regularly scheduled shipments are listed on the site. This has meant lower customer service costs and higher customer satisfaction for SGS.

A logistics company specializing in transportation and warehousing for the clothing industry, SGS offers a complete range of logistics services throughout the Nordic and Baltic region. Employing around 300 people, the company offers services such as distribution, order picking and assortment, order dispatch and customs clearance. For shippers, an important part of SGS's service is the web-based Track & Trace service. This allows SGS's customers to track individual shipments all the way through SGS's logistics network: from the manufacturer to the retailer. The service is very popular among customers and a key differentiator for the company.

The remote regions of Scandinavia and the long distances involved in deliveries create challenges for SGS in supplying customers with up-to-date information on shipments. Prior to the mobile application, SGS customers sometimes experienced delays of up to five days or even more before they saw the confirmation on the web. These delays led to increased traffic at the call center.

The mobile solution

To solve these challenges, SGS has deployed a real-time shipment tracking application based on data collection via

WAP. Using his WAP-enabled mobile phone, a driver can confirm delivery, input information on who signed for it and whether the contents of the delivery were correct. The application improves customer service by shortening the time for shipment data to appear on the company's web site, keeping everyone much better informed about the status of orders. The system also prompts the driver about the next destination on the planned route.

Each of the 150 delivery drivers employed by SGS in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway is equipped with a WAP-enabled mobile phone. Following delivery of a shipment, the driver uses the phone to log into the Track & Trace system to confirm delivery. Immediately thereafter, the customer can see the delivery confirmation on the Internet. In a typical case, the driver spends less than one minute per customer using the mobile application, with a total of about 15-20 minutes per day.

In contrast to the past, the driver does not need to manually enter further data into the system when he returns to the depot.

Simple deployment and ease of use

In mid-1999, when SGS decided to build a data gathering system to reduce the data entry delays and to improve customer service, it considered several alternatives in addition to WAP, including a satellite-based system and off-line mobile solutions. After careful consideration, SGS concluded that WAP offers several benefits. These include a simple, flexible development environment, web leverage in terms of infrastructure and skills, low device costs, standard-based technology and a short time to market. For all these reasons, SGS decided that WAP would best meet the company's needs.

One of the main requirements for the system was ease of use. The need for user friendliness was called for by the users of the system, the SGS lorry drivers, who have given the system their seal of approval. Most drivers needed less than 10 minutes of training to learn to use the system, which SGS sees as proof of its ease of use. There are very few data points to enter and most of these are menu driven.

The system is based on the Nokia Activ Server, an award-winning open software solution designed specifically for the corporate market. It enables mobile connectivity to a company's legacy information systems, Intranet and Extranet services, securely and cost-effectively.

Future development generated by encouraging experiences

The mobile application has allowed SGS to achieve its initial business objectives of meeting customer demands, demonstrating an ability to innovate and improving the productivity of employees.

The system has produced cost savings in various areas, particularly in the call center and central data-entry and archiving. Customers contact the call center far less often now that the

Track & Trace web site shows real-time information. SGS is also satisfied with the cost of the WAP communications themselves.

In today's business world, speed is a critical factor. SGS required a short time to market for the shipment tracking application. The Nokia Activ Server met this requirement: it took only 1,5 man months from development to full production. Furthermore, training the employees to use the application was fast.

SGS plans to expand the system to cover other aspects of its operations, such as automatic e-mail notification to customers if shipment delays are expected. The company is also looking forward to the opportunities promised by GPRS. For SGS, being at the leading edge of technology is very important.

For more information on WAP at work in business, visit www.nokia.com/corporate/wap

Nokia Networks
P.O.Box 321, FIN-00045
NOKIA GROUP, FINLAND

In the U.S.
5 Wayside Road
Burlington, MA 01803
U.S.A.

In Asia Pacific
Nokia Pte Ltd
438B Alexandra Road
#07-00 Alexandra Techbopark
SINGAPORE 119968

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