More Efficient, Streamlined Work Processing for Design and Management Contractors

Jobs performed by DMC's operatives can be invoiced as soon as the client signs on site

The Company

Design & Management Contractors (DMC) was founded in the 1960s to 'Design and Manage' refurbishment works. It has grown to become a leading general maintenance company, with clients including prominent high street banks and retailers as well as hotel chains and bars. DMC is registered with Corgi and NIC and employs all general trades in-house with over 100 field-based operatives to perform reactive and planned maintenance duties, offering a first class service to clients.

Previously Cumbersome Process

DMC used Microsoft's Access database to handle its business until it got to the stage where it needed a new database every year and record locking and corruption made it impossible for the 30 office based staff to use. Even with this system, there was a huge number of paper processes. With 500-700 work orders per week, paperwork was taking too long to process. Mobile operatives would have to phone or fax details for office staff to enter job status information into the system. Job and time sheets would be returned periodically from workers vans – often torn or dirty, invariably late. Two full time staff would collate this paperwork as well as parts and materials orders to a header sheet to consolidate each finished job. Only when this was done and verified could an invoice be raised. Stewart Robertson, Director of DMC commented: "Work orders would typically take two weeks to process and our service, whilst on a par with our competitors, was not as fast and smooth as we felt it could be."

Destiny Digital Pen

In the process of trawling the market for a solution, John Hooper of DMC had a demonstration by a company called Destiny of a digital pen and paper system for data entry. With this system, engineers enter details onto the form and a camera in the nib of the digital pen captures the information as it is written. By ticking the 'send' box at the bottom of the form, the captured data image file is sent via a Bluetooth connection to the engineer's mobile phone, where it can be verified. Once verification is complete, the data is then transmitted to a central server where it is automatically attached to the job record for access. Although the software with the system was not appropriate for DMC's requirement, John could see the potential for a digital pen for businesses in the contracting industry.

Design and Management Systems is Born

John's experience in the industry was such that he knew exactly what he wanted and it soon became clear to him that the software he was looking for did not exist! So, he decided to specify his own software and set up a company to develop it; first to meet DMC's requirements, then to promote it to a wider audience. Design and Management Systems was born.

Introducing JobFlow

With his newly hired programmer, John set about unloading his experience of DMC's workflow processes and soon developed a system that brought together all of the elements involved in a job. The most important thing was to provide instant access to all processes and costs for the duration of the work as well as a comprehensive analysis of it on completion. John had perfected a powerful workflow management application. JobFlow.

The DataScriber Difference

For entering data via the newly discovered Digital Pen method, John created the DataScriber option. "The clever thing about the digital pen" says John "Is that the operatives complete job forms in a way that is not significantly different to before. Minimal training was required as it didn't impact on DMC's existing paper-based processes. The difference is in the office, where staff can raise invoices immediately a customer signs the job sheets and that signature is transmitted over".

The Last Word

DMC now has some 70 operatives using JobFlow with DataScriber and productivity has been greatly improved. The new system, with its automated data capture, has reduced work order processing time from two weeks to just minutes. Instead of field-based staff having to leave client sites and phone in to order spare parts, it is now done automatically by simply ticking a box. Stewart Robinson comments, "The job status now changes dynamically so that office based staff can see exactly what work is complete and what needs to be done. New jobs can be pushed to the relevant skilled workers the instant they come off-site, which has greatly improved productivity. The benefits also translate to our clients, who get a more prompt response to calls, we can even send them a copy of the worksheet the instant it is complete. And, we now invoice instantly, a major contribution to improved cash flow."

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