

Case Study



Fort Bend County Municipal Utility District No. 25 Saves over 7,000 Pieces of Paper a Year with Motion Tablet PCs

Overview

Region: Texas
Industry: Municipal Utility

Customer Profile

The [Fort Bend County Municipal Utility District Number 25](#) has evolved from serving a single, small subdivision to its current service base of nine subdivisions, numerous apartment complexes, a special events ranch, two schools, several commercial establishments and a number of out-of-district locations, including the Sugar Land Municipal Airport, the Houstonian Golf Course and a TxDot Facility. In addition, FBCM25 also provides operations, accounting and billing services to other MUDs and cities.

Business Situation

Relying on a primarily paper-based workflow, FBCM25 faced problems with communication, inaccuracies, inefficiencies and time-consuming processes.

Solution

FBCM25 discovered the [Motion® J3500 Tablet PC](#), which combines ergonomics, a Microsoft® Windows® operating system, substantial battery life and the processing power needed to run its business applications.

Benefits

- Eliminated a paper-based workflow, saving over 7,000 pieces of paper a year
- Digitized service orders, which can now be processed in real time
- Reduced unnecessary steps, enhancing efficiencies
- Improved communications and productivity
- Enhanced customer service

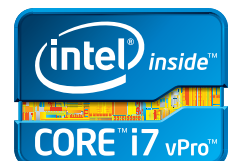
"FBCM25 is responsible for increasing awareness and finding new ways to reduce our footprint. We were able to lead by example and eliminate a paper-based workflow with the Motion Tablet PCs, while reducing vehicle miles, which validates our commitment to being green, saving over 7,000 pieces of paper a year on service orders alone."

Steve Kim, Director of Information Technology, Fort Bend County Municipal Utility District No. 25

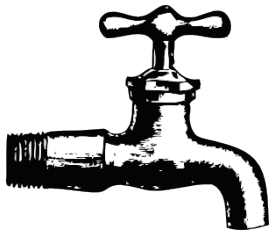
Relying on a primarily paper-based workflow, Fort Bend County Municipal Utility District No. 25 (FBCM25) faced problems with communication, inaccuracies, inefficiencies and time-consuming processes. In an effort to streamline and digitize the process, FBCM25 equipped Field Operations staff with rugged laptops. However, the laptops were too cumbersome to carry to the point of service and not mobile enough for the field environments.

FBCM25 discovered Motion's [J3500 Tablet PC](#), which offered ergonomics, a Microsoft® Windows® operating system, substantial battery life and the processing power needed to run its business applications.

Equipped with the Motion J3500 Tablet PCs, FBCM25 is able to provide more efficient sewage and drainage services as well as meter readings, inspections and repairs to customers.



“We’ve gone from a manual paper process to a greener, paperless environment. Now, the Field Operations’ workflow depends on completely electronic service orders, which can be created, sent, uploaded and processed in real time.”



Overview

The [Fort Bend County Municipal Utility District Number 25](#) (FBCM25) has evolved from serving a single, small subdivision to its current service base of nine subdivisions, numerous apartment complexes, a special events ranch, two schools, several commercial establishments and a number of out-of-district locations, including the Sugar Land Municipal Airport, the Houstonian Golf Course and a TxDot Facility. In addition, FBCM25 also provides operations, accounting and billing services to other MUDs and cities.

According to FBCM25, most people do not spend much time thinking about water and sewer services. For example, as long as water comes out of the spigot when turned on, or the commode flushes when the handle is pushed, people tend to take this finite natural resource for granted. Hence, the FBCM25 Board of Directors, District consultants and service providers are responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of water is available when customers need it. The District, in addition to providing quality customer service, is proud to fulfill its commitment to area residents, including:

- Maintaining the purity of the water supply;
- Ensuring the provision of quality service;
- Maintaining the integrity of the sanitary sewer and system;
- Controlling the tax base within acceptable limits; and,
- Ensuring the financial growth and stability of the District.

Challenge

Relying on a primarily paper-based workflow, FBCM25 faced problems with communication, inaccuracies, inefficiencies and time-consuming processes. Each morning, Field Technicians and Operators collected the day’s service orders from the main office. All relevant data, such as customer information, services performed, meter readings, billing information and supporting documentation, were handwritten on paper forms. At the end of the day, the Field Technicians and Operators returned to the office, typed the service orders using desktops and deposited the paper copies with the billing department.

“There were stacks and stacks of service orders that took an enormous amount of time to file all day long,” said Leonela Ruvalcaba, manager, billing and collections, FBCM25.

According to Michael Gonzales, FBCM25’s assistant chief operator, if a customer called with an emergency, the billing department created a new service order, and Field Operations staff interrupted his or her day to return to the office and collect the paperwork even if they were only minutes from the service address, losing precious time, disrupting workflows and negatively impacting the customer experience.

Initially, in an effort to streamline and digitize the process, FBCM25 equipped Field Operations staff with rugged laptops. The team realized early the solution did little to improve the process, and

actually doubled the workload. They were too cumbersome to carry to the point of service and not mobile enough for field environments. As a result, paper forms were still needed to collect information, and once back at the trucks, staff would re-enter the information into the laptops.

Field Operations personnel found that, while staff was able to digitally record data, the rugged laptops failed to provide the ability to upload and share information in real time, as there was no connection to the office’s network or database. Only when the employees returned to the office were they able to synchronize the laptops with the network and upload the day’s information.

What FBCM25 needed was a more mobile solution that provided the power, connectivity, durability and performance required to meet its demands.

Solution

FBCM25 discovered the [Motion® J3500 Tablet PC](#), which offered field-focused capabilities unlike anything else available on the market.

“We’ve gone from a manual paper process to a greener, paperless environment,” said Steve Kim, director, information technology, FBCM25. “Now, the Field Operations’ workflow depends on completely electronic service orders, which can be created, sent, uploaded and processed in real time. All the information collected in the field feeds back to the central database and updates the billing software in real time, meaning our billing department has access to the same information.”

Gonzales also cites the J3500 Tablet PC’s digitizer pen as an essential tool. “The pen is great for backflow testing and customer service inspections, both of which require signature sign-off. Because we can capture signatures directly on the tablet, we’re able to send digital copies of the certificates to the office, completing the job immediately while on site instead of creating extra steps for the billing department.”

Results

Equipped with the Motion J3500 Tablet PCs, FBCM25 is able to provide more efficient sewage and drainage services as well as meter readings, inspections and repairs to customers.

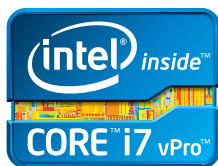
“We’ve transitioned to an entirely digital, real-time environment,” said Gonzales. “Previously, the Field Operations team logged into a desktop at the office, typed the information from the paper forms, then downloaded the information to a USB key, which was delivered to the IT department to download the information to the server. Sometimes we had to chase the Field Technicians and Operators just to get the information into the system.”

Now, equipped with Motion’s Tablet PCs, the process happens in real time while the Field Operations staff is on the job site, enabling the District to eliminate unnecessary steps, enhance efficiency and save time. Additionally, the billing department is able to update and dispatch new service orders throughout the day while Field Operations staff are in the field,

“The tablets help us deliver on our philosophy of customer service by improving communication, efficiency and productivity.”



“The tablets aren’t something we use to send an email or draft a letter. The tablets have become an essential daily tool; one of the best we’ve purchased in a long time.”



eliminating the need to return to the office and increasing the amount of jobs completed each day.

Ruvalcaba notes, “The Field Operations team, billing department and customers benefit from the real-time access to information and improved collaboration. With the paper process, if a customer called and inquired about their service, the billing department provided the information the next day at the earliest. Now, the billing staff is able to research anything the customer wants to know while still on the phone.”

“The tablets help us deliver on our philosophy of customer service by improving communication, efficiency and productivity,” said Kim.

FBCM25 also benefits from increased accuracy and reduced errors because paper service orders were occasionally misplaced and/or handwriting could be misread, which led to Field Operations repeating jobs or the billing department calling Field Operations to verify information.

“The Field Operations team couldn’t be happier with the J3500 Tablet PCs,” said Kim. “Field Operations keeps the tablets with them at all times – on the jobs, docked and charging in [locking mobile docks](#) mounted in the trucks in between jobs and docked in docking stations at home to charge overnight. The Motion Tablet PCs are both a mobile computing solution and a full-on desktop replacement for Field Operations.”



Taking care of the environment is also an important initiative for FBCM25. The District regularly develops new programs and works to educate customers on ways to reduce, reuse and recycle as well as conserve water. According to Kim, “FBCM25 is responsible for increasing awareness and finding new ways to reduce our footprint. We were able to lead by example and eliminate a paper-based workflow with the Motion Tablet PCs, while reducing vehicle miles, which validates our commitment to being green, **saving over 7,000 pieces of paper a year on service orders alone.**”

Conclusion

FBCM25 sees the Motion Tablet PCs as a valuable, long-term investment and looks forward to incorporating new use cases for increased efficiency and productivity. The District plans to introduce GIS software in order to map the District’s water lines and access points both above and below ground. Field Operations will be able to pinpoint exact locations as well as access unit history and warnings in real time. Finally, FBCM25 plans to incorporate the tablet’s camera functionality for photo documentation during repairs.

“The tablets aren’t something we use to send an email or draft a letter,” said Gonzalez. “The tablets have become an essential daily tool; one of the best we’ve purchased in a long time.”

