

## Leveraging a Mobility Platform in Municipalities

Municipalities are highly complex organizations that generally operate as an umbrella of many individual business units, each with different functions and work processes to perform. These departments operate independent of the other city/county departments; often with different enterprise management systems and different corporate data stores. The common relation between the departments is that they serve the same customers and share responsibilities for the same geographical areas. This article will outline how some municipalities are beginning to see front line, mobile workers as a business unit in itself. Being able to manage these mobile workers with one mobility platform that can tie into the backend systems of any departments is proving to be a highly efficient, cost effective way to boost productivity and manage the mobile worker.

### Question: What do Brisbane, Toronto and Philadelphia have in common?

The answer is that they all use the same enterprise mobile application platform. Each city uses the platform for different business applications and processes but they all see the platform as a means of being able to share information and best practices across the organization.

**Brisbane, Australia** began using FieldWorker in 2004. It was used as an extension to their enterprise Asset Management solution. Several years later, Greg van Ryt, the technical manager at Brisbane City Works was alerted to the existence of Fieldworker's mobile platform in the asset management department. At that time Greg needed a works application to automate maintenance management of traffic signals and road signs. "I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the Council already had a mobility platform that I could leverage for my department" Van Ryt noted. Brisbane City Council manages many different business entities like the Ferry and Bus networks, Works and Building departments; each function deploying large field staffs. Van Ryt continued "I learned that we're often so busy in our operational silos, that sometimes information is not shared quickly enough across the organization. The current uses and future opportunities for extended platform use have heightened the profile for mobile applications in Brisbane".

The **City of Toronto** Children's Services Division has been using FieldWorker since 2008 to provide critical inspection and monitoring services for the city's day cares. A subsequent tender award by Toronto's Water Department revealed that both departments would be using the same mobility platform, each of them with different enterprise data repositories and with very different business processes. Subsequent to the RFP award, the transportation department learned of the common platform approach and had added their business processes to the deployment specifications. Mary-Ann Bedard, project manager in Toronto Children's Services states "we started out in this process with small expectations that grew as we discovered what this platform would enable us to do."

**"Philadelphia** is known in the United States as a leader in providing social service programs throughout the 'City of Brotherly Love'" claims Dr. Barbara Bunkle, head of Philadelphia's street outreach program. The choice to use mobile technology to automate the survey and registration processes was driven by the need to do more work faster and with fewer errors. Dr Bunkle and her selection team had some high level

requirements: the technology needed to work regardless of having a network connection; it had to be as simple to use as the paper forms; it had to be able to enforce completion of records on site (rather than in the office later) and it would need to track GPS positions of the homeless so that they would more easily be able to track down the same client in the future. Although funded by the City of Philadelphia, the Street Outreach Program looked to peer groups in other like municipal organizations for help when researching their solution. The business problem is viewed as 'specific' to social service delivery organizations; not as a data management and communications issue. Barbara Bunkle anticipates that her department's success will attract attention from organizations with which they benchmark service deliveries. Even though the solution is in its infancy, other departments within the city including the public housing inspection department have taken a keen interest. "We typically share solution ideas across the organization so we're not reinventing the wheel. Other departments within Philadelphia are already set to leverage our initial successes with the FieldWorker mobility platform." stated Dr. Bunkle.

## **The New Municipal Department? Mobile Workforce**

It is clear that municipalities large and small have one thing in common – a large number of mobile workers. As seen in the above mentioned cases, the work that mobile workers do in cities is very diverse: from the obvious (works department) to the not-so-obvious (homeless tracking). Traditional municipalities have approached mobile automation department by department, potentially wasting time, money and effort by reinventing the wheel each time, and ending up with many different solutions to support. The view that progressive municipalities are taking is to look at the mobile workforce as a common element, and provide them with the tools they need to do their jobs more effectively. We couldn't agree more!



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