



Windows Mobile Customer Solution Case Study

Gencor redirects 17,000 wasted work hours and creates more time for customer service

Overview

Country: Canada

Industry: Agriculture

Customer Profile

Gencor is a Guelph-based artificial insemination co-op that delivers onsite services to more than 6,000 dairy farmers. Its technicians inseminate more than 290,000 cows annually across Ontario.

Business Situation

Gencor wanted to eliminate a costly data input process and replace it with a cost effective solution that would allow technicians to remotely input breeding and sales data into its database.

Solution

With the help of Microsoft registered partner TeamSFA, Gencor deployed a Windows Mobile-based solution saving the organization approximately \$320,000 or the equivalent of 17,000 staff hours annually.

Benefits

- Redirecting 17,000 work hours
- Remote access to customer data
- Saving \$30,000 on phone bills
- Short learning curve
- Lower cost for hardware

“By giving our technicians the ability to update the breeding and sales database in real-time, we estimate Gencor will save approximately \$320,000 annually or the equivalent of 17,000 wasted staff hours.”

Bill Seegmiller, manager, Field & Marketing Division, Gencor

Gencor is a Guelph, Ontario-based artificial insemination cooperative that delivers onsite services to dairy farmers. Its network of technicians inseminates more than 290,000 cows annually throughout 25 counties in Western, Central and Northern Ontario. In order to maintain accurate records of inseminations its technicians input breeding records into a database containing information on more than 1.2 million cows. In early 2000, Gencor replaced an expensive laptop-based data entry system with a Web-based platform. The result was a lengthy data input process that cost the organization approximately 17,000 hours of wasted time annually. With the help of Microsoft® registered partner TeamSFA, Gencor deployed a Windows Mobile®-based solution that helped create a cost effective way for technicians to remotely input data and eliminate expensive data entry redundancies.



Situation

Gencor is a farmer-directed artificial insemination cooperative based in Guelph, Ontario. Employing approximately 156 employees throughout 25 counties in Western, Central and Northern Ontario, the organization is committed to bringing the best in livestock genetics to its 4,600 active members. Delivering onsite service to dairy farmers, its network of professional technicians inseminates more than 290,000 cows every year.

As part of its suite of services, Gencor also provides farmers with a breeding slip for each cow it inseminates. The information on each slip identifies the bull that was used for the insemination, which cow was inseminated and the date the process took place. When a new calf is born as a result of Gencor breeding, the farmer uses this breeding slip information to register that calf with an appropriate Canadian breeding association that uses the information to help ensure pedigree lines and the purity of the breed are preserved.

In order to maintain an accurate record of all the inseminations they perform, Gencor technicians input their activity into a massive internal database that contains information on more than 1.2 million cows. Its field staff process more than \$13.5 million worth of sales and invoice information annually through this field application.

In 2000 Gencor implemented a Web-based data entry system for its technicians. This system replaced an older laptop-based solution the organization had been using for the previous 15 years. Gencor always believed that outfitting its technicians with mobile computers was the ideal system for keeping its database updated, but the cost to maintain and replace their fleet of laptops was simply becoming too expensive for the organization to sustain.

The Web-based data entry system, although effective, created a lengthy data input process. Field personnel had to handwrite breeding slips, maintain a paper record, and then manually enter the information into the main database at the end of the day from Internet-enabled desktop PCs. The technicians were not only recording the same data twice, but were also using an additional 45 minutes to an hour each day to complete the input process. Based on an average of 50 field technicians entering data on a daily basis, this process was costing Gencor approximately 17,000 staff hours per year.

Gencor wanted to find a cost-effective solution that would allow its technicians to enter data directly into the database from the field in real-time. The goal was to eliminate data entry duplication and abolish the need to enter information at the end of each day.

“Gencor wanted to give that hour back to the technician or sales representative at the end of the day so they could spend more time focusing on their customers,” said Bill Seegmiller, manager, Field & Marketing Division, Gencor. “We wanted a solution that would allow our technicians to send and receive more dynamic information such as customer inventory data, and be able to access this data in real-time.”

Solution

In the fall of 2005, Gencor enlisted the help of Microsoft® registered partner TeamSFA. TeamSFA deployed a fleet of 90 handheld devices based on Microsoft Windows Mobile® software running on SQL Server® 2005 database software.

“We looked at a few different mobile device options including Research In Motion’s BlackBerry,” said Ed Kloosterboer, technical analyst, Gencor. “We didn’t seriously consider the BlackBerry as an option because of

potential integration issues. Additionally there are no models of the BlackBerry that take advantage of touch screen functionality, which is the basis of the navigation system in the TeamSFA sales force automation software.”

The initial handheld device deployment consisted of Audiovox PPC-6600 handhelds running Windows Mobile 2003, which have since been upgraded to HTC Touch devices powered by Windows Mobile 6.0 from Bell Mobility. The new devices were rolled out in January 2008 and offer improved functionality along with enhanced features and applications.

Next, TeamSFA linked the mobile solution directly to Gencor’s existing database system through its TeamSFA software. To further complement the system, 90 mobile Bluetooth printers were introduced into the field that Gencor technicians could use to print breeding slips and sales invoices onsite directly from their handheld devices.

“TeamSFA develops on the Windows Mobile platform because there is nothing else on the market that compares to it from a capability standpoint,” said Michael Flynn, co-founder, TeamSFA. “Microsoft has the best possible operating environment for handheld devices and is also the only company offering a mobile solution that could not only provide a method for inputting data, but also a means to synchronize and integrate this data directly with Gencor’s database.”

The initial deployment and training phase was completed in approximately four months and Gencor’s technicians learned the system quickly. The end result was a complete sales force automation system that created a seamless flow of data encompassing all aspects of Gencor’s insemination process from initial dispatch and order distribution, to

breeding slip generation, onsite invoicing and data input.

Benefits

Since deploying the Windows Mobile-based solution, Gencor has experienced a number of benefits including the elimination of duplicate data entry, the ability to send and receive enriched business data remotely, and a more streamlined and efficient communication process.

Redirecting 17,000 work hours

Gencor has seen substantial time savings for both its field technicians and its dispatch staff. The Windows Mobile-based solution has helped Gencor take a major step toward achieving its original goal of eliminating its paper-based method for tracking breeding information and the need for technicians to re-enter the same data into the Web-based system at the end of the day.

Since removing the duplicate data entry process, Gencor reports that its technicians are able to spend more time with their customers because they have eliminated at least 45 minutes of administrative tasks that used to fall at the end of each day. Gencor has effectively taken back the time needed to complete the data processing and given it to its technicians, which has resulted in an enhanced experience for its customers.

“By giving our technicians the ability to update the breeding and sales database in real-time, we estimate Gencor will indirectly save approximately \$320,000 annually or the equivalent of 17,000 staff hours,” said Seegmiller. “The actual time needed for data entry onsite has been reduced significantly because the TeamSFA Windows Mobile solution is so easy to use. When the technicians are actually recording a breeding on the handheld, they literally have to tap a few fields on the screen to complete a record,

which takes little time and results in very accurate information.

Remote access to customer data

Gencor's technicians in the field can now access a wealth of data that was previously unavailable. Not only can they send and receive breeding and sales information, they now have access to a wide range of customer information including contact numbers, addresses and directions to customer sites. They are also able to access pertinent customer account profiles and a payment manager. Field technicians also benefit from real-time access to Gencor's herd database, which provides in-depth information on the customer's livestock.

"There is a wealth of data accessible on the mobile devices that our technicians in the field have never been able to access before," said Seegmiller. "Having this information at their fingertips is a significant benefit to our technicians as it allows them to provide answers instantly and show our customers that we know and understand their business."

Saving \$30,000 on phone bills

Gencor also experienced significant cost savings associated with the newly streamlined communication process. Because the data in Gencor's database is now transmitted and available wirelessly the technicians no longer have to call into the office and wait on hold to reach their dispatchers.

"Since deploying the Windows Mobile platform we estimate that Gencor has saved more than \$30,000 annually in phone bills alone," says Seegmiller. "It gets very expensive paying for the cell phone airtime technicians use while waiting on hold or when calling dispatch staff numerous times throughout the day. We didn't intend for the volume of communication between our employees to decrease, but the streamlined

system has proven to be a tremendous benefit for both the company's bottom line and the working environment of our technicians."

Gencor technicians can now handle the bulk of their routine communications via data services on their Windows Mobile-based handhelds. The devices also provide them with the option of conducting more in-depth calls via built-in cell phone capabilities as required.

Short learning curve

Despite having limited experience with smartphones and varying degrees of technology know-how, Gencor's technicians were able to quickly adapt to their new Windows Mobile-based devices. The technicians were all given a three-hour training session and after working with the devices for approximately two weeks, all 80 of Gencor's technicians and eight of its sales representatives were comfortable with the flow of data and the device interface.

"Because most of our technicians were already familiar with working on desktop PCs, making the transition to the familiar Windows Mobile environment was simple and straightforward," said Kloosterboer.

"TeamSFA was also able to customize the interface of our new data entry system to have the same look as our old Web-based system. This went a long way toward making the transition smoother for our employees."

Lower cost for hardware

Gencor is also reaping the benefits of a significantly lower cost for its mobile hardware. Prior to deploying their Windows Mobile-based devices, Gencor was paying approximately \$2,500 for each laptop it had in the field. The laptops were expensive to replace and were also prone to damage. Gencor now pays only a few hundred dollars to replace damaged devices and receives

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For more information about TeamSFA products and services, call 1-877-878-8326 or visit the Web site at: <http://www.teamsfa.com/>

For more information about Gencor products and services, call (519) 821-2150 or visit the Web site at: <http://www.gencor.ca/>

free hardware upgrades under the terms of the service agreement with its mobile provider. Additionally, if the devices are damaged, data can be pushed from its servers directly to the new device, reducing the time it takes to get a new handheld into the field.

“The laptops we were using simply weren’t durable enough for use in the field and really weren’t the right device for work inside the cab of a truck or inside a barn,” said Kloosterboer. “Because Windows Mobile software operates on such a wide range of devices, we are able to choose a device that suits our needs. The fact that we were able to upgrade our entire field staff with new devices in just two years is a testament to the cost effectiveness of Windows Mobile-based devices.”

Overall Gencor is very happy with the results of the Windows Mobile-based solution. Morale has increased and Gencor reports that its technicians have a strong appreciation for the solution.

“Our technicians realize that mobile technology has changed the way they work. They no longer have to struggle to get something as simple as directions to a customer site and can access complete inventory information with a few taps on their touchscreens,” said Seegmiller. “The Windows Mobile devices have truly become an integral part of our technician’s day-to-day routine.”

Windows Mobile

Windows Mobile brings the power of the Windows® operating system to mobile devices, helping businesses and their mobile employees stay connected while on the go. Windows Mobile runs mobile versions of Microsoft programs, including Microsoft Office Outlook® Mobile, Internet Explorer® Mobile, Pocket MSN®, Windows Media® Player Mobile, and Microsoft Office Word Mobile, PowerPoint® Mobile, and Excel® Mobile. With Windows Mobile, information workers get powerful software combined with the familiarity of Windows. Combined with available service plans and connectivity options, Windows Mobile-based devices, available from 42 device makers and 68 mobile operators in 48 countries, can be used to make calls, send e-mail and instant messages, surf the Web, and access critical business information even when users are away from the office.

More information about Windows Mobile can be found at: www.microsoft.com/windowsmobile

Software & Services

- Windows Mobile
- SQL Server 2005

Partner

- TeamSFA

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