

Panasonic

Working with
BT 

TOUGHBOOK

In a bid to streamline its engineering function and attain new standards in customer service, BT has turned to Panasonic for an innovative technology solution.

Case Study

BT sets a Tough challenge

Until recently, the three groups of BT service, payphone and network engineers relied on hand-held equipment and lacked the support of up-to-date technology. Without independent communications allowing access to critical data, the field workforce of 30,000 – including 15,000 mobile engineers – had to depend on customer PDSN or exchange lines to report faults, order parts and schedule repair programmes.

To find an appropriate solution that would not only increase efficiency of operations, but would simultaneously improve BT's customer-facing image, a range of notebook, palm top and laptop options were considered.

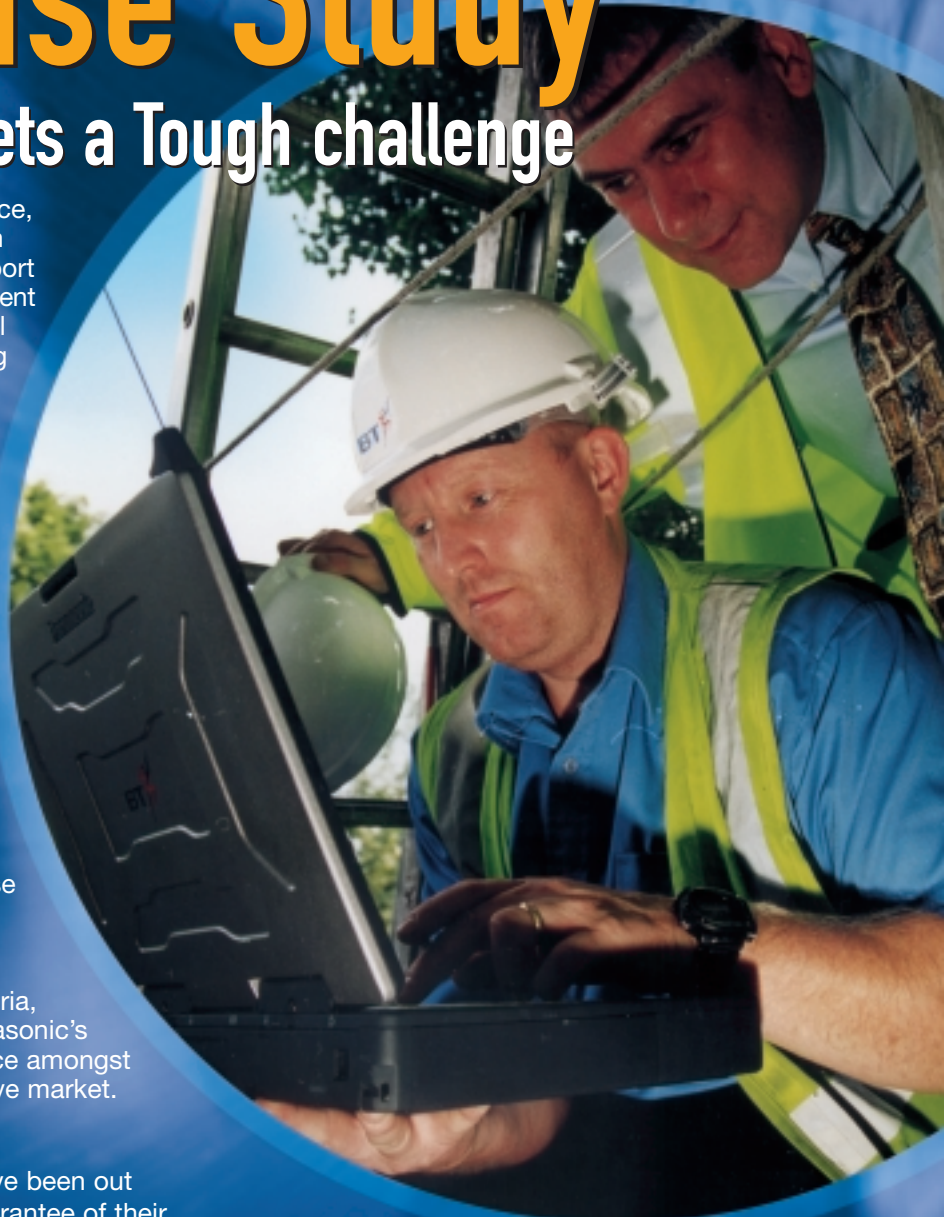
It was decided that a smart, easily portable, full-screen device would best benefit the engineer's status and work requirements. The equipment had to be rugged enough to withstand external conditions and flexible enough to customise with integrated communications facilities.

A robust laptop system with individual configuration capability answered the criteria, and with ruggedness being a priority, Panasonic's Toughbook solution offered a natural choice amongst the systems available in today's competitive market.

Panasonic delivers a flexible and rugged solution

"Large numbers of Toughbook laptops have been out in the field for up to 5 months and the guarantee of their ruggedness appears to be true... there have been no failures of hardware to note."

Ian Allison, National Implementation Manager for Field Systems





Panasonic delivers a flexible and rugged solution

Following a successful pilot launched in October '99 in York and Ipswich, engineers nationwide are now utilising Panasonic Toughbook CF-27 Notebook PCs with integrated GSM Wireless communications modules and PSDN capability. It is planned eventually to use 30,000.

The flexible nature of the Panasonic Toughbook solution allows optimum customisation of the equipment. To meet BT's individual requirements, the units have been specially designed

to incorporate GSM, while PSDN capability is engineered into the laptop with an integrated modem and speakerphone.

Toughbook enables BT engineers to independently access a range of relevant digital services via a modem card. Individually configured, the equipment is pre-loaded with BT software.

Panasonic is providing the whole solution to BT's technology requirement, including a 3-year service, support and insurance package. A team of technical support staff is also based full time at BT's service centre in Leicester.

Building relationships

Because of the large number of Panasonic laptops requiring customisation for BT's purposes, a joint configuration process has been developed at the Cardiff factory with input from both companies. This collaboration ensures that each laptop is bespoke for a particular engineer before being despatched, and has resulted in a unique working relationship between Panasonic and BT.

Improving customer services

The Panasonic Toughbook solution not only provides the field force with improved communications and data access, but enhances BT's entire customer service operation. Engineers can now make PSDN and data calls without having to go off-site or plug in to private customer lines. Also, being more in line with the highway and broadband range of products they sell to customers and readily able to provide demonstrations on their own laptops, their status of telephone

engineer is effectively elevated to that of communications systems consultant. In addition, the Toughbook unit is smart, modern and looks impressive, encouraging customer confidence in BT's approach to technology.

Delivering financial savings

Previous practice demanded that engineers – particularly in the WorkManager team – spent a lot of time travelling between work sites and exchanges to acquire replacement parts or to communicate critical information through data transferral. Toughbook offers immediate advantages allowing engineers easy access to the BT system which automatically transfers data back to the laptop. In this way, the service operation has become far more time-efficient, delivering substantial financial savings to the company as a whole.

Encouraging computer literacy

Because of the exciting technology the equipment offers, staff are taking advantage of their asset, becoming more computer literate and gaining more experience of the digital services provided by the BT network and Internet service. At the same time, BT benefits from knowing their equipment is being looked after and put to good use.



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