

# Panasonic



eircom

## TOUGHBOOK

The Republic of Ireland's leading telecommunications company, eircom, is restructuring its work management and customer service systems with the help of Panasonic ToughBooks.

# Case Study

Engineers on the 'eir waves' stay better informed with ToughBook.

As competitive pressures mount for the former monopoly supplier, eircom is naturally seeking to increase productivity, reduce costs and enhance customer service delivery. One area targeted for improvement is the field engineering operation. In order to streamline work management for customer service technicians, the company is replacing its manual despatch system with a mobile computing platform. Consequently, eircom is currently rolling out CFM34 Panasonic ToughBooks to their workforce.

### Simple management of complex information

Previously, engineers received their daily workloads via phone, fax or in paper format from their team manager. With a laptop solution capable of providing a 'front-end interface' to a number of upstream systems, customer service technicians can now access work schedules and necessary customer information remotely - enabling them to deliver a faster, more efficient service.

Whilst eircom aims to deploy 250 units by the end of April 2001, the ultimate plan is to equip the total field force of 1630 engineers with ToughBooks within a year.

### A robust and reliable working partner

*"We carried out detailed and extensive trials with a number of different solutions, looking for specific criteria. These included a light and robust A5 notebook with in-built GSM connectivity and PSTN dial-up, an easily handled device that would encourage the user to improve technology skills, and a direct partnership approach with our supplier,"* explained project manager, Declan O'Flynn.





In searching for a solution that met all their requirements, eircom tested products provided by Dell, IBM, Itronix and Panasonic. Feedback from end-users was an important factor in the final choice.

The CF-M34 was the only product that combined all of the desired specifications in one package. It proved to be of a manageable size, yet sufficiently robust for the field environment. Users found the small screen was easy to read in both indoor and outdoor settings. With integrated communications and favourable total cost of ownership figures, it was considered to be the strongest

contender and suitable both for standard field task management and use as a technical data application.

*"...and the warranty offered by Panasonic was attractive."*

#### **Software**

ToughBook units at eircom are installed with an Intranet browser solution as interface to the upstream systems. The software application used is IR 5.5 plus Browns remote access client, to enable secure log in to the company's WAN. Anti-virus software installed is updated regularly when users log on to the LAN.

#### **Service and support**

Due to the desired four-hour in-field replacement of faulty equipment - a tough challenge considering the difficult road communications in many parts of Ireland - a specific service package was agreed with Panasonic using ten geographically located depots around the country. This was considered vital for the company as a service organisation, since non-functioning equipment would mean reverting to a less efficient manual back-up process.

*"The laptop is just one element in a chain of processes involved in customer service delivery, and a chain is as strong as its weakest link,"* said Declan O'Flynn. *"We cannot afford to have a highly visible external interface as the weakest link."*

#### **Clear evidence of business benefits**

With other company-wide initiatives in place to help transform the organisation, initial reports suggest productivity improvements of as much of 15-20 per cent is being experienced. The company has also noticed an increase in technological competence amongst technicians, whose newly acquired expertise helps them in advising and resolving customers' Internet connectivity problems.

*"The integrated nature of the solution has been instrumental in its success so far,"* concluded Mr O'Flynn, *"as has the balance between ToughBooks' portability and ruggedness which enhances skills and is so important for our operational environment."*

#### **An on-going supplier relationship**

In order to maintain an excellent working relationship, eircom has regular review meetings with Panasonic to co-ordinate delivery, project timelines and review any issues that inevitably arise in a project of such size and complexity.



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