

Panasonic

Snap-on Tools

TOUGHBOOK

In 1997, the UK operation of Snap-on Tools selected Panasonic ToughBooks as their preferred mobile solution for dealers. Four years on, despite the tough challenges of a harsh business environment and unavoidably rough treatment, the equipment is still going strong.

Case Study

ToughBook keeps business Snappy for tools Dealers.

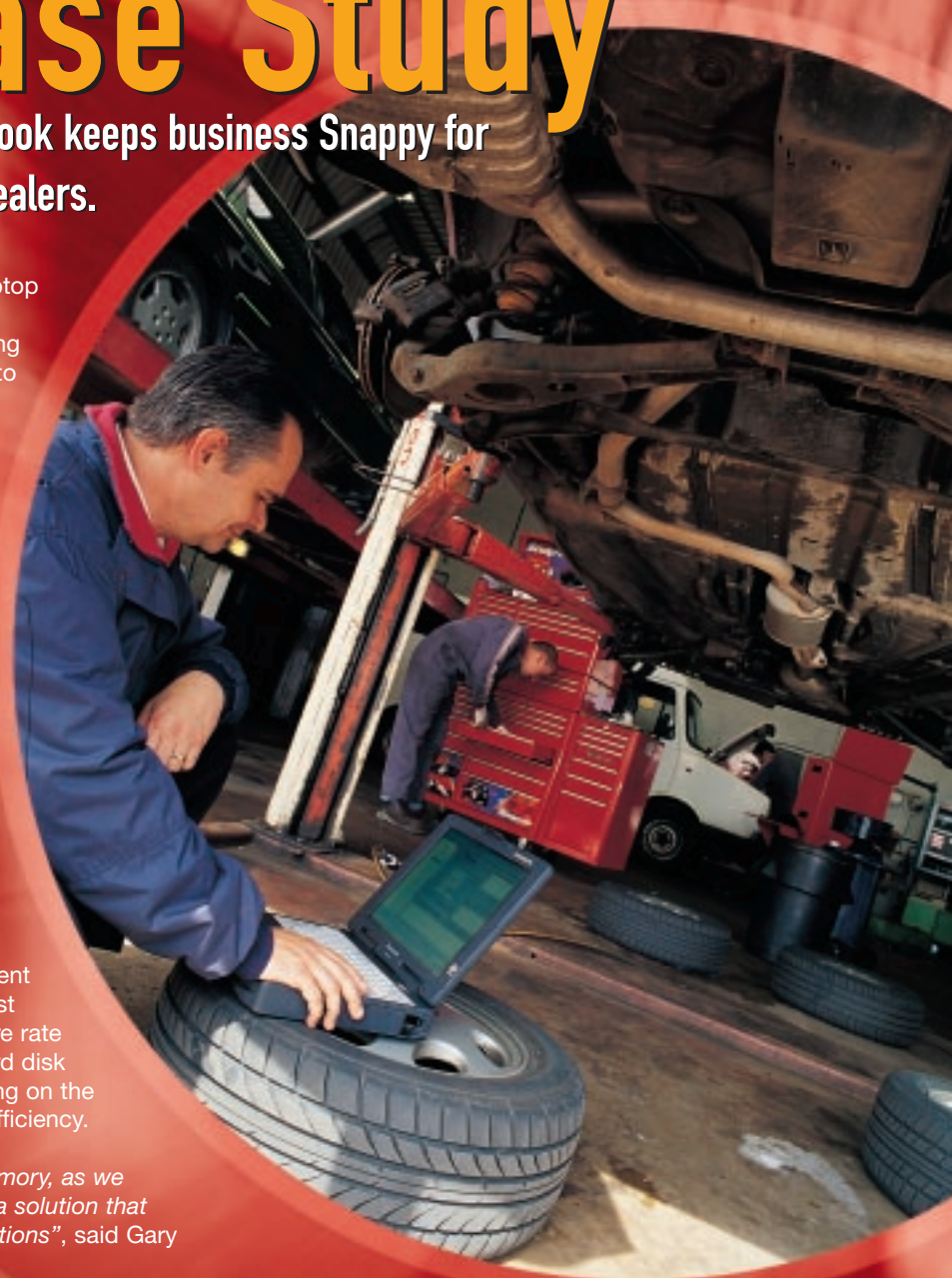
Over 400 self-employed dealers lease their laptop equipment from Snap-on. Their work involves taking orders for automotive trade and travelling between garages and farms in a fleet of vans to deliver their products. A mobile computer is essential if the independent franchisee is to provide a competitive and efficient service, but since dust, dirt, extremes of heat and cold and spilled oil are everyday hazards in the business - it was clear that not just any laptop would stand up to the job.

The right tool for the trade

Following the successful deployment of units in the USA, where the ruggedised Panasonic notebook impressed users with its performance and showed a marked improvement in reliability from previous products, Snap-on UK decided to evaluate the Panasonic CF 25 for itself.

Various other mainstream notebook solutions were considered before the ToughBook was finally selected. Snap-on vendors tested different products in the field for suitability, and amongst the other models trialed, recorded a high failure rate of key components - from LCD screens to hard disk drives. Ultimately this would have had a bearing on the total cost of ownership and reduced service efficiency.

"We weren't looking for speed, or loads of memory, as we only run one application. We were looking for a solution that could stand up to our particular working conditions", said Gary Wiescher, Snap-on's Network Administrator.





Snap-on Tools UK acquired a mix of CF25s and CF27s and now has around 400 in use. These units are issued via a leasing plan to the franchisees which enables them to upgrade after 3 years to a newer system so they can take advantage of the latest technology.

Software

Snap-on's ToughBooks have been installed with their own tailored programme. The 'Dealer Sales System' software enables Dealers to dial in orders, view historic sales data, check stock and deal with accountancy issues with their

customers – in fact everything needed to run their business efficiently. They also use a mobile solution to send and receive data from Snap-on Tools' head office in Kettering, so minimal breakdown of the mobile device is crucial.

Support

As the laptops were to remain company-owned with a 3-year lease agreement to replace faulty or broken equipment with new, it was important for Snap-on to have only one version of hardware in the field. This way they could create a manageable support system across a widely dispersed operation.

The company has an on-going relationship with Panasonic who provide a 3-year warranty on all hardware.

Low failure rate delivers benefits all round

"Due to the quality and reliability of the Panasonic ToughBook PCs, we're experiencing a failure rate of less than 1 per cent per annum when you exclude misuse and accidental damage," explained Gary Wiescher. "This has had a really positive roll-on effect and has enabled us to streamline the helpdesk support team to be a more effective unit - they spend more time adding value than being sympathetic about broken machines."

Snap-on has been able to maintain its team of staff providing support for dealers' hard- and software to only three, making immediate financial savings. Also, fewer faults and breakdowns have led to a decrease in necessary stock of spares. Whereas other solutions demanded a 10-15 per cent parts stock to cover repairs, the company now only keeps 2-3 per cent.

In addition, savings have been made on upgrades of equipment. Under the lease agreement, the company is required to upgrade technology as necessary, but due to the number of original units that are still functioning at peak performance, the requests for replacements has been reduced.

Common accidents, which once resulted in costly damage, are also being prevented. Whereas a simple mistake such as closing a notebook with pens or other objects left inside would lead to a cracked screen, ToughBook's design includes a plastic shield which gives added protection.

"It's the little things like these that make the difference, and that's why we're sticking with ToughBook," confirmed Gary Wiescher.



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