

# A smart move: Spirit provides Amey with Honeywell Dolphin 99EXs



When Amey's Metering Services division developed a new programme for rolling out smart meters, it needed a reliable, accurate and effective handheld device for data and image capture. The company was already using devices provided by Spirit Data Capture Limited and asked Spirit to source suitable terminals. Spirit provided the Honeywell Dolphin 99EX, along with MobiControl mobile device management software. These helped to consolidate significant cost savings for Amey.

Amey is one of the largest companies working for the UK's public and regulated sectors, with a workforce of some 20,000 employees. It's also one of the UK's leading meter operators, administrators and consultancies, working in the domestic, industrial and commercial sectors. Its Metering Services division (within the company's Utilities business unit) provides traditional water, gas and electricity metering, including smart dual-fuel metering.

One important aspect of the division's operations is the development of new smart metering contracts. Andy Smith is the Application Support Manager / Senior Developer. He explains: "We have smart meter contracts with three of the Big Six gas and electricity suppliers and two smaller suppliers. We also have various industrial and commercial metering contracts with large companies in the UK."

He continues: "The primary aim of each contract is to replace existing traditional gas and electricity meters with new smart meters. This forms part of the government's national smart meter initiative." The government scheme aims to install smart meters in every home in the UK by 2020. The new meters will provide near real-time data on energy use, and will eliminate the need for estimated bills.

"We're currently in the foundation phase of these contracts," says Andy. "This has included the development of our systems so that they can communicate directly with the suppliers' systems for booking customer appointments."

### Searching for a smart solution

Amey needed new rugged handheld devices with a good battery life for the smart meter roll-out. The terminals would need mobile data capture, scanning and photo capture capabilities. They therefore approached an independent specialist, Spirit Data Capture Limited, which had previously sourced and installed Honeywell Dolphin 7900s for another project for the company.

With Spirit's help, the Metering Services division looked at six possible handheld terminals and eventually selected the Honeywell Dolphin 99EX. This is a very rugged mobile computer, with an IP rating of 67. It has a 3.7" ultra-bright sunlight readable display and dual SIM functionality. It's ideal for both indoor and outdoor applications and has smart sensors to increase productivity, as well as an impressive battery life of 15 hours.

Andy Smith says: "Our previous excellent experience with the Dolphin 7900s had an influence on our decision to go for the 99EX. However, during the decision-making process, we looked at various criteria, including processor, battery capacity, screen type, support and maintenance, and cost of ownership. The 99EX either came top or second in each category."

The new Dolphins will be used with Amey's specialist Today software. This is used by the onsite engineers to capture job details. It's part of a suite of products provided by Wheatley Associates that Amey uses for its meter operator contracts. The job allocation system has been loaded onto the large number of Dolphin 99EXs that have been deployed so far. Today enables the engineers to scan meter barcodes; to take photos of the installation; and to enter other information. The software will also be used to instigate the commissioning process of the smart meters.

Spirit has also installed Soti's MobiControl, the UK's leading mobile device management software platform. This enables users to gain the maximum benefits from their handheld terminals. Andy Smith reports: "MobiControl has given us the ability to manage the Dolphin 99EXs even more effectively. It also allows us to support our engineers easily and quickly if they have an issue with a job. Previously, if there was an issue with a terminal, it had to be returned to the office."

### Providing smart results

"The Honeywell devices have been performing well," adds Andy. "Their speed, battery life and usability have all easily met our expectations. When we originally moved to the Dolphin 7900 from the original devices we were using, we saw a significant reduction in costs. The 99EX is continuing to maintain these cost savings."

The feedback from the engineers has also been positive: "We used the Today software on the previous Dolphins, so although it has been rewritten to work on the 99EX, it still has the same look and feel, so no re-training was required. The form factor of the device is also very similar, so there haven't been any big changes in terms of how the device is used."

Andy adds: "Amey has also been very happy with the level of service we have received from Spirit, who provide a comprehensive technical support and repair management service contract. They also installed MobiControl and provided training on the software at Spirit."

He concludes: "Spirit has been very good at providing technical support with both the Dolphins and MobiControl. Their help during the procurement phase through to after-sales service has been excellent. They also provided support for the set-up of the 99EX for mobilisation, as we had a very tight deadline for getting the devices ready and didn't have time to develop a build for the device. Their help was therefore invaluable. Spirit continues to work closely with Honeywell to provide the support we need."



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