

Handheld Devices Dramatically Improve Property and Building Maintenance

BY EITAN SHIBI, TECHS4BIZ CORPORATION

Many property managers, superintendents, inspectors, and maintenance personnel are still performing their daily tasks and activities using manual, paper-based forms. However, appropriate technology and simple-to-use automation tools can simplify daily activities, increase productivity, and minimize administrative paperwork. By combining easy to use software and handheld devices, staff can focus on their professional services rather than on administrative repetitive tasks.

Handheld Devices

Handheld devices should reflect or improve on what already exists on paper forms. For example, if a user is filling out a maintenance or inspection activity form including specific information, the handheld should provide the exact same functionality. As with paper forms, a user can pick from a list of possible choices and/or write or type in information, according to the organization's preferences. An added benefit of using handheld devices in conjunction with software is that data is automatically transferred from the handheld device to your database without the need for further data entry or reformulation of the data.

There are many additional benefits of using handheld devices, in contrast with manual or paper based processes. The handheld device can include validations that allow or disallow data entry. It can provide the user with historical information pertaining to previous work orders or particu-

lar pieces of equipment. Furthermore, by using barcodes and scanners attached to the handheld devices, quick identification of devices and equipment improves efficiency and minimizes human errors.

Handheld applications should also be designed to minimize unnecessary data entry and keystrokes by incorporating a variety of techniques, starting from pick lists, to check boxes, to lookup lists. Finally, handheld software

should be able to run on multiple hardware platforms, providing flexibility and utilization of future technology without unnecessary software upgrades.

The Database/Server

To maximize utilization, handheld applications should not be stand-alone. They should be designed from the outset to collect information, display and manipulate information, and transfer information to and from a desktop or server database and back to the handheld seamlessly. The means of data transfer can be through a standard cradle, wired modem, or wireless.

The desktop/server application should include management functions such as scheduler, equipment tracker, work order manager, customer call manager, and analysis capabilities.

Business Functionality

The combination of software and handheld devices should deliver functionalities to improve service activities:



- Plan and schedule inspection and maintenance activities.
- Record details about your activities.
- Track and better utilize your tools, equipment, and assets.
- Retrieve and analyze information.
- Set up automatic alerts that notify you of upcoming or missed activities.
- Provide inspectors, technicians, and maintenance personnel with “smart” handheld devices, enabling better and more efficient execution of work while eliminating paperwork.
- Utilize barcodes to improve data collection and to minimize human errors.
- Utilize time-saving mechanisms that allow your staff to shift their focus from administrative tasks to improving processes and customer service. (For example: create service templates for specific equipment so that service orders can be added automatically as new equipment is added to the system).
- Automate re-occurring tasks; once they are completed, new tasks are automatically created in the future.

Benefits

- Provide staff with easy to use tools that focus on performing tasks; let staff spend more time performing their activities and less time on paperwork and data entry.
- Track, manage, and supervise 3rd party service providers to ensure service levels.
- Improve efficiencies; perform activities effectively; simplify repeatable tasks.
- Improve planning; analyze information, needs and patterns; identify trends and highlight potential problem areas.
- Receive customized periodic reports and alerts, delivered to your email.
- Ensure that service is performed according to warranty, guidelines and regulations.

A variety of organizations can utilize handheld devices to significantly improve the efficiency of their activities:

1. Property Managers

Property managers, facilities managers, superintendents, and maintenance personnel can track, manage, and improve maintenance, inspection and service activities for facilities, buildings, malls, and other properties.

2. Inspectors

Building inspectors, life safety inspectors, and a variety of other inspectors can dramatically improve their activities using handheld devices. Utilize built-in alerts, view historical information, view required inspection details, record action taken, or ensure proper audit trail can be easily done.

3. Service Providers

Service organizations can track and manage their operations as well as improve customer service, gain competitive advantage, and enhance their services.

4. Custom Applications:

Specific customized applications can improve existing “paper-intensive” activities by utilizing the power of handheld computing to automate and simplify processes.

Organizations can also increase their return-on-investment by utilizing the same handheld devices to automate multiple departments and activities. By combining appropriate software and handheld devices, organizations can save time and money while improving operational efficiencies and customer service. ◆

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