

A Mobile Surveyor Case-study



About Plastex

Plastex Ltd is one of the longest-established PVCu fenestration manufacturers in the UK. Nowadays it is also a leading designer, supplier and installer of aluminium, timber, fibreglass and composite fenestration.



Plastex employs around 70 people and has a turnover of over £10 million. Plastex have always endeavoured to operate their business using the latest methods, primarily aimed at improving production efficiency. Recently Plastex decided to turn their attention to improving the efficiency of their field staff, especially those involved in site surveys.

Project Background

Plastex wanted to improve the efficiency of the site survey processes to boost customer service and reduce costs.

Existing paper-based survey methods were wasteful in a number of ways:

- Surveyors had to travel to the office each day to pick up survey orders and deliver completed paperwork.
- Surveyors could fail to gather all the required measurements, or to record measurements inaccurately.
- Survey data was manually keyed into production systems – a process that allowed human error to creep in.

The main consequence of a failure in any of these survey stages was to build a window that did not meet customer requirements – a very costly business indeed as the window was unlikely to be able to be re-used elsewhere. As a consequence there could also be customer satisfaction problems.

The Solution

Plastex worked with the National B2B centre, based at Warwick University, to help define a solution to their problem. The B2B Centre examined Plastex's existing processes in detail and devised a technical solution that could improve matters. The solution identified was a new mobile system that would provide surveyors with a flexible tool to mitigate the problems with the old paper processes.

After a detailed evaluation process, Plastex selected **Mobile Surveyor** from data2go Ltd, as the best solution. Mobile Surveyor has the following features which Plastex could use to improve their survey process:

Complete mobile working –

Surveyors now carry a small handheld PDA computer to complete all their survey tasks. Survey orders received at the office are sent directly to surveyors whilst they are working remotely. Equally, completed surveys are sent directly back to the office for processing. The system uses ordinary phone data networks and is fast and secure.

Error-free, automated measurement –

Mobile Surveyor uses a highly-accurate laser measurement device to capture dimensions which are then 'beamed' back to the surveyors' PDA. The system also ensures that the correct measurements (and only those measurements) are taken and even asks the surveyor to take one or two suggested checking measurements to further ensure that no mistakes have been made.

Versatile – Surveyors can capture photos, voice notes and free-hand sketches as part of each survey to explain tricky areas to the factory staff who will manufacture the windows.



Mobile Surveyor provides an easy-to-use solution to aid surveyor productivity

Controllable – All completed surveys are stored for review by office QA staff before release for production. The system also produces management reports to show various performance measures.

Integrated – The system automatically retrieves customer information from Plastex's CRM system and provides a data interface file so that survey data can be uploaded into the production systems.

Return on Investment

The project had a 9-month payback period, based on waste reduction alone, but there were these other advantages too which have helped cement the system's success:

- Flexibility in being able to control surveyors' work schedule whilst they are away from the office.
- A more favourable impression being left with customers – they can see that Plastex is a modern company with leading-edge tools.
- Standardisation of survey methods – the system uses defined best practise for measurements, so all surveyors conform to the agreed approach.
- A sense of pride by surveyors, who know they are using the latest tools and this has help raised their skill levels and profile in the business.

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