

IBM, Retriever Communications help BP Australia speed data collection for faster analysis and decision-making



Handheld devices and mobile applications are transforming the way companies of all sizes manage their remote field service personnel and the data they collect. By automating a traditionally paper and time-intensive data collection process, and by integrating remotely collected data into their systems in real-time, companies maximize the value of information in management decision-making.

Retriever Communications, an IBM Advanced Business Partner, provides wireless field applications accessible via PDAs and tablet devices to improve field worker productivity and data integration. Leveraging the stability and security of the IBM System x® to ensure customer data integrity,

Retriever offers its solution as a service to businesses throughout Australia, the UK and Europe, with field operations staffs ranging in size from as few as five to as many as hundreds of individuals.

Retriever customer, BP Australia, operates 220 company-owned and operated stores throughout Australia. Each of those stores undergoes a comprehensive on-site compliance audit on a quarterly basis. A staff of field-based BP Compliance Advisors, who operate remotely, performs these audits. They are responsible for documenting store performance in areas ranging from financial and inventory management, to health and safety.

**IBM Business Partner:
Retriever Communications**
IBM business partner, Retriever Communications, provides mobile integrated field service and field inspection applications accessible via PDA devices. Retriever enables companies to automate field service staff workflow, maximize productivity and report real-time data gathered in the field, directly to their enterprise management systems. Retriever Communications is headquartered in Sydney, Australia



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According to Daniel Mason, BP compliance assurance manager, prior to utilizing the Retriever mobile application, not only were the audits themselves highly inefficient paper-based procedures, but also bottlenecks in reporting and distributing the data collected compromised the value of the audit for both the stores and the BP management organization.

“Our compliance advisors would spend 6-7 hours in each store filling out a 150-question checklist, then they’d go home and type the results into a spreadsheet they’d e-mail back to the store, along with a list of everyone related to the operations for that store,” he said. “Add travel time and that makes for a long day to audit just one location.” Mason adds that BP had no centralized repository where audit data could be accessed by the management team in Melbourne. Once per quarter, an administrative resource in the BP office would collate this data and compile a summary report for corporate managers.

Real-time reporting and integration transforms data into valuable management tool

BP called on Sydney-based Retriever Communications to increase the efficiency of its audits, speed data reporting and improve data accessibility throughout the organization. “The BP compliance advisor can now feed real-time audit data directly into the

Retriever application via their PDA as they’re doing the inspection. And literally within seconds of finishing that inspection – while they’re shoulder-to-shoulder with the store manager - they receive a graphical, intuitive report showing highlights and areas where the store needs to focus its efforts,” said Drew Seitam, Retriever director of services. “They can do an immediate walk-through with the manager to deal with problem areas on the spot rather than send a Word document 24 hours later and wait three months for a follow up review and inspection.”

In addition, leveraging the high level of integration between Retriever and the BP back-office systems allows the system to generate – within seconds of receiving the data from the field - seven standard reports required by higher-level operations managers. Those managers are also able to access and manipulate the data to develop customized reports.

“We’re collecting the same data, but we’re getting it immediately and now are able to make intelligent decisions based on that availability”, said Mason. In a matter of seconds our managers can drill down and organize the data any way they need - by department, by product class, by territory, by state - to identify trends,” said Mason. Thus, operations managers in the BP headquarters can identify and gain valuable insight into emerging problems before they become

entrenched issues and take immediate remedial steps. “We can automatically upload new sets of questions relating to potential problem areas to all our compliance advisors in the field via PDA. We don’t have to wait for quarter-end to make critical decisions on something that happened two months ago. Those decisions are now based on real-time intelligence and their impact is immediate across the organization.”

Mason cites a specific example. In support of BP vendor advertising and promotional campaigns BP managers are expected to set up point-of-sale (POS) displays throughout their stores. Early this quarter, BP compliance advisors began reporting inconsistent or improper utilization of POS displays. BP category teams were immediately alerted to the non-compliance and mobilized to solve the problem. Within one week the teams developed and distributed a POS training pack for store managers, resulting in significant improvements in POS compliance - from 65% to 95%.

The real-time reporting capabilities of Retriever reduced reaction time by 2 months. “We were able to identify and solve a problem by looking at the intelligence gathered from just a few stores as opposed to relying on a quarter-end summary report of every store audit,” said Mason.

Taking a wider perspective, Mason believes Retriever is one critical factor contributing to improvements in overall store compliance rates, which have increased from 75% to 85% since Retriever’s implementation. “These new insights improve our business operations across the company, and most importantly, allow us to better support our vendors, serve our customers and stay competitive.”

In addition, by restructuring the actual audit and eliminating the paper process each BP compliance advisor’s productivity has doubled, enabling BP to reduce its field staff by half.

Escalating IBM relationship

Retriever has been an IBM partner since its inception in 1996. The company relies on the IBM System x servers to play a critical role in growing its Retriever-as-a-service business, according to Matthew Vaughn, marketing program manager. “For our customers, data security and service reliability are paramount. They rely on us to hold their data, basically forever, so we really become part of their office system. Our servers must be up when they are up, and the data must be available to them immediately,” he said. “The IBM System x provides us with the foundation of dependability and data protection we need for our customers’ satisfaction.”

Having recently achieved IBM Tivoli® Open Process Automation Library

“We’re one of only two companies worldwide to have achieved Maximo OPAL status for wireless field technician application extension, so we are going to leverage all the opportunities IBM offers to raise our profile in the marketplace.”

Matthew Vaughn,
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Retriever Communications

(OPAL) status, the company is taking steps to extend its marketing and business development relationship with IBM. In the short term, Vaughn hopes to leverage the tight integration between Retriever and IBM Maximo Asset Management software and is working with his Sydney-based IBM ISV and Developer Relations Marketing Manager to identify programs and benefits that will help Retriever reach out to the Maximo community. "We want to let prospective customers know we've achieved Maximo OPAL status for wireless field technician application extension, so we are going to leverage all the opportunities IBM offers to raise our profile in the marketplace."

For more information

Please contact your IBM sales representative or IBM Business Partner. Or you can visit us at: **ibm.com**

More information about the benefits and resources offered through the IBM Business Partner program is available at **ibm.com/isv**

To learn more about Retriever Communications, visit: **retrievercommunications.com**

To find out more about BP Australia, go to: **bp.com.au**



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