

MOBILE COMPUTING ... a business reality

While most companies are still talking about the benefits mobile computing can deliver, Adcheck reports that it is using mobile technology as a real-time intelligence-gathering solution.

The local market intelligence company's .NET territory management solution – written in C# and based on SQL Server – allows managers to keep an eye on their remote staff without leaving their desks.

"Traditional mobile workers were expected to come into the office on a regular basis to complete paperwork and get updated assign-

ments," says Ian Hoffman, Adcheck's CIO. "Now, with a personal digital assistant (PDA) running the Windows mobile operating system, broad GPRS availability and Adcheck's server-based software, users need never waste time travelling to the office again."

Using the technology, managers assign each user their tasks from a Web-based application. When remote employees start their working day, they synchronise their PDAs and receive their to-do lists. After completing each task, they enter any remarks or results into their PDAs – and synchronise. All data is transmitted to a hosted server, managed by Adcheck, before being sent on to customers.

To ensure customer data and applications are secure, the system has been designed with full control residing in the server. PDAs can even be rebooted remotely should the devices give trouble. The system also keeps audit information about the mobile devices to ensure no components are removed or lost while in use.

IMMEDIATE

"Adcheck uses GPRS to synchronise, but has the ability to fail-over to other communications protocols in case of a cellular failure," adds Hoffman.

"This ensures the immediate availability of

MOBILITY THAT ROCKS

Adcheck Mobile has four products: Adcheck ePharma, Adcheck eTelecoms Adcheck eProp and Adcheck eRetail; each provides tailored mobile solutions to meet the specific needs of vertical market sectors.

All are based on Adcheck Mobile's Quick Market Intelligence (QMI) territory management solution. Ian Hoffman, Adcheck Mobile CIO, says QMI is at the heart of every Adcheck Mobile solution and is a vertical-ready product in its own right: "It is a combination of all our industry solutions' best practices, technologies and processes that has been built and refined over many years of gathering and distributing mobile market intelligence"

The mobile service offerings are based on three proprietary QMI initiatives:

MOBILE SOLUTIONS FRAMEWORK – a set of best practices for the creation, roll out and support of flexible, robust mobile applications.

MOBILE MONITOR WEB APPLICATIONS – provides a single point of entry for support and maintenance staff to control software rollouts, manage a client's field force, communicate with staff, verify orders and monitor field force performance. Each client has its own portal, providing a real-time view of a field force anywhere in the world.

ZERO-FOOTPRINT ENTERPRISE REPORTING – disseminating reports to unique subscribers on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, in formats ranging from SMS messages and HTML reports to powerful Excel-based reports with customised reporting intelligence.



Established in 1971, Adcheck has rendered market intelligence gathering and deployment solutions to South African corporate and multi-national companies for over 30 years.

Adcheck Research provides a traditional print media advertising verification service to the South African advertising industry. It includes checking of CIs against newspaper and magazine tear sheets; surveys monitoring competition and *ad hoc* provision of current and historic tear sheets.

This division also provides its New Age service, which provides ad spend and promotional pricing of products and companies that advertise in publications, TV and radio, via in-store promotions, direct-to-home distributions and the Internet. Its in-store observation enables virtual real-time reading of what happens in-store in terms of pricing, promotional activity, product availability, assortment offered, merchandising technique, share of facings, consumer behaviour and a check on the distribution agent.

Clients of Adcheck Research include retail specialists such as Woolworths, Shoprite and Pick 'n Pay. The division also assists leading brands such as Clover, Proctor and Gamble, Kelloggs and vehicle manufacturers Volkswagen and Nissan.

data in almost any situation. As soon as data is synchronised, managers can fire up their browsers and view up-to-date reports on each employee's progress, taking any required action."

Reports can be viewed in pivot table format, which allows users to drag and drop fields to gain the most appropriate view of the data. To make the process as smooth as possible, the server remembers the last view of each person and automatically formats the next report he/she calls up in the same manner.

The data is not only available for viewing, however. As it is synchronised, it can be analysed by intelligent applications on the server, which can spot anomalies and immediately send a message to the employee to perform additional operations at a specific location in an attempt to clarify the situation.

A QUESTION OF TRUST

A problem many managers have with remote work is trust: how does an organisation know its workers are doing what they are supposed to do and going where they are supposed to go? Adcheck says its territory management software solves this problem by making it simple to triangulate any user's position at any time of the day.

Using the browser interface, managers select user names and request location information according to the PDA's position in the cellular network. The location – including the exact longitude and latitude of the device – is returned within a few seconds, ensuring the company knows where its users and devices are at all times.

"The Adcheck mobile platform brings customers closer to their suppliers in real-time," says Hoffman. "It can be customised to any company's requirements, providing a cost-effective way to keep mobile workers productively engaged without wasting time on administrative tasks or losing track of where they are and what they are doing."

