CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Cox Communications

Keeping Service Technicians productive on the road

"We looked at several solutions and Afaria fit our needs best. We were looking for something truly wireless that can deal with limited bandwidth and not compromise our production capacity."

- Michael Kovash,
MIS Manager,
Cox Communications

ABOUT THE COMPANY

- Cox Communications provides bundled telecommunication services for both residential and business customers. Established in 1962, the company now has over 6.3 million customers and 21,000 employees coast-to-coast.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- To update software used by service technicians in the field required IT professionals to manually update 3,000 mobile devices. This approach required the devices to be pulled in from the field and it was both time-consuming and costly.

SOLUTION

- Cox relies on Afaria from iAnywhere for remote device management to manage in-vehicle mounted mobile devices.

RESULTS

- The company saves time and money by automatically sending updates
- The automatic document distribution feature enables Cox to educate technicians remotely about technical

New homeowners need to have their cable connected, on the double. A commercial enterprise needs a high-tech telephone solution, pronto. A home-based business needs a cable modem, A.S.A.P. And a Cox Communications technician needs to serve all of their needs—today. Is it possible to be everywhere at once?

A full-service telecommunications provider, Cox Communications has 6.3 million customers, and offers services including cable, local and long distance telephone services, high-speed Internet connections and commercial voice and data services.

The company prides itself on its reliability and superior customer service. They strive to make sure that their technicians can provide prompt, efficient service.

DEALING WITH LIMITED LONG DISTANCE

Cox Communications employs service technicians throughout the United States. In order to efficiently serve their high volume of customers, the company tries to make the most of all of its resources.

To enable their technicians a streamlined means for keeping track of service calls, the company installed Panasonic in-vehicle ruggedized mobile devices in their trucks and vans. With the mobile devices in place they were able to become paperless, creating a great savings for their company while providing better, more efficient service for their customers. It's been paying off."

Our technicians travel from customer site to customer site, installing, repairing, disconnecting—we needed an extension of our office system computers without paper and without the typical wait times," says Michael Kovash, MIS Manager for Workforce Automation at Cox Communications. "With the mobile devices in place, we were able to become virtually paperless."

One challenge Cox encountered when performing installation updates to the mobile devices was that the company had to pull each and every single device in from the field. That meant manually updating thousands of devices. It also meant lost time for the technicians who would normally be using the devices to perform their work. With such a costly and time-consuming update process, IT experts at Cox Communications knew they should be able to find a more cost effective means to update their mobile devices.

SEARCHING FOR A HIGH-SPEED CONNECTION

While their WAN/LAN clients have the network bandwidth to use SMS to automatically send out updates, they were looking for software that was specifically designed to meet the needs of wireless devices."

We looked at several solutions and the iAnywhere product fit our needs best," says Michael Kovash. "We were looking for something truly wireless that can deal with limited bandwidth and not compromise our production capacity."

They knew exactly what they needed—a means to easily and automatically send out application updates. It had to be efficient and it had to be reliable. A quick review of competing wireless solutions made the choice clear.

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INDUSTRY

- Telecommunications

PERFORMING APPLICATION UPGRADES AT THE SPEED OF SOUND

The IT professionals knew that by automatically sending application updates to mobile devices they would eliminate the tedious and time-consuming chore of performing manual updates. Additionally, by reducing the amount of time a vehicle was out-of-commission while an update was being performed, the company would save a tremendous amount of money.

Although the Service Technicians already may have significant experience with mobile computing, it doesn't matter whether they have a lot of experience with Afaria, as this technology functions behind the scenes. It's invisible to the end-users. Best of all, they don't have to do anything extra in order to receive the continual updates sent to them from headquarters via Afaria. "During our first test at installing a software upgrade remotely, we experienced about a 60% success rate," advised Mark Manglicmot, WFA IT Analyst for Cox Communications. "Since that first pass we have changed our approach and have improved both throughput and success rate. We still have work to do before we achieve our optimum configuration, but we are close to completion at this point."

The IT professionals at Cox can perform a variety of different tasks with Afaria. Prior to sending software updates, they can write simple scripts to check to see if the mobile devices have adequate memory for the updates. Such preparation can prevent problems before they happen. System administrators can also set up user profiles if they choose to send updates to certain user groups and not to others.

Users receive the updates just by logging on. It's that simple. The IT professionals can be confident that the updates are sent. The technicians can get to their appointments without any delay. Both parties save time and the company saves money.

TRANSMITTING BROADBAND COMMUNICATIONS

Like many of iAnywhere's customers, Cox purchased the software for a specific need, but is finding that the software enables them to perform additional work that also saves them time and money.

Cox's main goal in using Afaria was to dramatically reduce the cost of manually updating the mobile devices used by their service technicians. They're happy with those results. But they quickly found another valuable use for Afaria.

Soon after installing Afaria they discovered they could use the solution's document distribution feature to automatically send out informational updates to their mobile devices. What's more, the software even allows for the creation of different user profiles, so if a company routinely runs different promotions in different parts of the United States, they can set up different profiles and then send only the information that is relevant to that region.

Currently, the communications company is developing a plan to use the document distribution feature to send out two types of documents: educational, informing technicians of new techniques to accomplish their work, and informational, illuminating promotions and other types of business information that will allow them to offer better deals to their customers. Previously both types of information would have only been available to the service technicians on paper."

We're really excited about automating the sending of this information to our technicians. Previously, the information would be available to them at monthly meetings. They'd get a piece of paper that may or may not have made it into the technician's clipboard for future reference. So we feel that with Afaria we're going to get a good return on our investment," says Kovash.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Like many of the companies using Afaria, Cox Communications is confident that the software will prove agile and robust enough to meet their current needs and expandable enough to continue to meet their future needs. Even if they completely change the type of devices they're supporting, simple customization on their part can tailor Afaria to meet their needs.

"We're in the process of integrating handheld devices rather than just the high-end rugged mobile computers," says Kovash. "We think they'll give us a better return on our investment and we're happy that Afaria is compatible with them."

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