



UK POWER NETWORKS

TOUGHPAD FZ-G1

UK Power Networks energises its business transformation with Panasonic Toughpad tablets





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UK Power Networks owns and maintains the electricity cables and lines across London, the South East and East of England, keeping the lights on for the population. Its 2,500 field engineers maintain and upgrade power equipment, move and connect new electricity cables and carry out maintenance near or on overhead power lines.

When UK Power Networks implemented a business transformation process to improve customer service and make savings through efficiencies, a fundamental step in the process was equipping its field engineers with a single, mobile computing device to meet their needs.

"Our colleagues can be found up poles and down holes and often in very difficult working environments so the mobile device we chose was critical to the success of the project," said Jon Mason, a UK Power Networks lead field engineer and seconded head of mobile solutions for Business Transformation.

After reviewing options, the business selected a shortlist of three providers and established a mobile working group, made up of lead field engineers, field engineers, field staff supervisors, fitters, jointers, linesmen and other staff across all three of its operating regions to trial the devices. Alongside the trial, the company also organised a mobility day where 150 business representatives, comprising of both field staff and all levels of management, evaluated the devices and discussed the functionality with the vendors.

"It was very important to us that the workforce had a strong voice in the choice of device and that there was high user acceptance," said Jon. "They put the devices through their paces and the rugged Panasonic Toughpad tablet won hands down."

"The ruggedness of the Panasonic Toughpad was very important to our field staff and also the ability to read the tablet screen in daylight. When the team went out into direct sunlight it was a clear winner for visibility."

Jon went on to say that small but important features, such as the LED light on the tablet camera, were not available on other devices they tested.

"The design of the Panasonic Toughpad tablet had been clearly thought through for the utilities industry," he said. "Often working underground or in dark environments, the LED light on the camera is an essential feature for our staff for effective image capture."

Today, the Panasonic Toughpad FZ-G1 tablet is being rolled out to 2,500+ field staff across the business and the device is their critical communication tool. Connected via 3G to the company's SAP Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, the field staff receive their job instructions through the device using mobile SAP applications, which have been called 'My Jobs' on the tablets.

The engineers are able to access real-time and offline maps, asset information, health and safety and policy and procedure information. They then report and record their activity on the device and the information is relayed in real-time back to the central systems. When there is limited connectivity, the information is stored on the device and relayed when connection is re-established.

"The benefits over our old, complex paper-based system is a vast improvement," said Jon. "For example, with more than 14,000 sub-stations in London alone, the integrated map and asset information is a huge time saver. Due to the electricity risks involved in our business, we are also heavily safety process, policy and procedure driven. All the necessary information is stored on the Toughpad tablet with a search feature ensuring the field staff can find information quickly. It also relieves them from having to carry around large amounts of documentation."

"The electronic workflow system makes sure that field staff follow the correct procedure in the right order, such as risk assessments before starting work. Finally, if they complete a job early, information on the next task can be relayed to them directly without having to return to the office, improving productivity and cutting down on costly, excessive travel.

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The latest version of the Panasonic Toughpad FZ-G1 tablet is a fully rugged Windows 8.1 Pro device with 10.1 inch display. Powered by fourth generation Intel® Core™ technology with reduced power consumption, the device is faster for graphics performance and increases the standard battery life from eight hours to 10 hours (up to 20 hours with high capacity battery). With the high-performing battery option and new optional hot-swap battery capabilities, the latest Toughpad FZ-G1 can also offer seamless, uninterrupted 24-hour operation to continuously service mobile workers on shifts.

In addition, the device is equipped with the latest industry leading GPS technology to allow field staff to pin point their work areas and destinations faster and more accurately than ever before. Data communication includes the latest Wireless LAN 802.11ac technology that radically improves data transfer times.

The tablet is suitable for workers that need to operate touchscreen tablets with gloves and uses the latest IPS Panel technology providing a new level of viewing quality for tablet users working outside.

The Toughpad family is designed to meet the same durability standards as Panasonic's Toughbook laptop product line. The fully-rugged Toughpad FZ-G1 is certified according to MIL-STD-810G as well as an IP65 ingress protection rating for resistance to dust and water.

The FZ-G1 comes as standard with a high-quality HD 720p front web camera and upgraded optional 5MP or 8MP rear camera with triple flash capability for clear document, asset or site photos whatever the light conditions.

Using its Flexible Configuration Ports, the device can be configured exactly for the needs of the business, offering USB 2.0, Micro SDXC, True Serial port, LAN Connector, GPS, Barcode Reader and integrated smartcard reader optional. USB 3.0, Bluetooth® 4.0, HDMI and Wireless LAN capabilities are standard.



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