

Case Study: U.S. Foodservice

Mobility XE delivers 1.1 million additional productive hours. One of the largest food distributors in America, U.S. Foodservice runs a \$20 billion dollar enterprise that serves more than 250,000 customers including restaurants, hospitals, hotels, schools and government institutions. The company's sales force of 5,000 territory managers visits these customers to share promotion information, take orders and submit them for fulfillment. To give the managers reliable, real-time connectivity from customer sites, U.S. Foodservice adopted the Mobility XE mobile VPN as the foundation for a best-of-breed solution. It allowed the company to tap real-time data to improve service and recoup 1.1 million productive hours to devote to sales efforts.

About the Deployment

The territory sales managers visit customers and prospects in establishments ranging from small family-run diners to restaurants and hotels to corporate kitchens. The majority of meetings end in an order being placed to restock kitchen shelves. To access sales materials, determine product availability and transmit orders, the managers carry laptop computers. The Mobility XE mobile VPN ensures the reliable connections needed to deliver a real-time view of product availability and send orders directly from the customer site. This enhances customer service and makes the managers more productive since they can process orders immediately with fewer follow-ups.

More Than One Million Hours Saved

Before implementing Mobility XE, managers who attempted access over wireless connections or via dial-up from customer sites had to manually initiate the connections. In addition, explains Daniel Corcoran, Manager of Client Services, "With the traditional VPN solution we had before, if connectivity was lost for even a moment, the application would shut down. This often meant lost work, and always resulted in the rep having to log back in to the VPN connection and then restarting the application — wasting valuable time." Because of this, managers instead turned to batch-uploading orders at the end of each day using a dial-up remote access solution. To meet the 5 p.m. order cutoff, they stopped work at 4 p.m. to hurry home and send their orders in time. But now, says Corcoran, "Mobility XE provides our sales reps with a constant connection to the applications they need, even if the wireless connectivity blips now and again." Reliable access directly from customer sites gives each manager an extra hour per day to spend in the field — a total of 1.1 million more hours of productive selling time with customers.

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- Daniel Corcoran,
Manager of Client Services



Organization

U.S. Foodservice

Industry

Distribution / Food Services

Objectives

- Deliver access to existing applications without modification or customization
- Provide persistent connections to applications and data
- Offer a seamless solution so users do not need to learn new logins or change network configurations

Solution

- Mobility XE mobile VPN
- HP and Dell laptops
- Wi-Fi and cellular networks
- Sybase iAnywhere Afaria
- Sybase iAnywhere Information Anywhere Suite

Results

- Application sessions kept alive through wireless coverage gaps and suspend/resume cycles
- Users access networks and applications without complex logins or configurations
- 1.1 million productive hours recouped
- \$800,000 saved on printed materials and distribution

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Foundation for a Best-of-Breed Solution

U.S. Foodservice first considered a single-vendor solution, but after a test deployment they determined that it did not deal with all their wireless challenges in a manageable way. They opted instead for a “best of breed” solution with Mobility XE as the foundation. It also includes Sybase iAnywhere’s Afaia and Information Anywhere Suite, to support CRM and order-management functionality as well as remote servicing and updating of mobile devices. Mobility XE’s ability to persist connections enables the Sybase iAnywhere applications to survive through momentary disconnects, lost coverage, and even when sales managers suspend and later resume their laptop connections. In all instances, Mobility XE negotiates the connections behind the scenes to provide users with reliable, continuous access.

Streamlined Device Management

Operating system and antivirus updates had been performed in-house by the IT department but because managers only visit local offices for monthly sales meetings, issues often remained unresolved for long periods. Instead, with Mobility XE and Afaia mobile device management, reps leave their laptops on each night for remote updates.

U.S. Foodservice also implemented Mobility XE’s Policy Management module in order to best manage the available bandwidth. The IT department established two policies. During daytime office hours, only business-critical CRM, order management and emails are accessible. Updates and patches are blocked until allowed by the nighttime policy. This ensures that the sales people have the fastest available access to the applications they need to do their jobs and remain productive.

An Additional \$800,000 in Annual Savings

The solution also opened an opportunity for U.S. Foodservice to more efficiently distribute its promotional, marketing and training materials. Previously these had been printed and shipped to the managers. Using Sybase Afaia iAnywhere and connections through Mobility XE, the company provides a document library with real-time access to the materials, rather than relying on physical shipments. The managers can print them as needed, or show them on their laptop screens. Not having to print and ship saves the company \$800,000 annually.

A Proactive Sales Approach

"Before, when reps were batching orders, they wouldn't know until they got home at the end of the day if we were out of something," relates Corcoran. "Then they'd have to call the customer back and explain. Now, since reps are ordering on site, they're able to proactively explain any exceptions and keep the customers informed. Not only does the reliable real-time communication help us gain back a lot of productivity, which equates to more sales, but it also helps us move from a reactive sales approach to a proactive sales approach."

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