



## Microsoft Windows Mobile Customer Solution Case Study



### Overview

**Country or Region:** United Kingdom

**Industry:** Transportation Industry

#### Customer Profile

Drive Assist offers a credit-hire car service to help people inconvenienced by accidents that are not their fault. Established in 1992, it has 15 depots located throughout the U.K., more than 1,000 employees, and a turnover £150 million (U.S. \$261 million) a year.

#### Business Situation

Immense growth over a short time meant Drive Assist needed to find a way to improve business efficiency and service. A quarter of a million collections or deliveries per year, and six paper forms associated with each, left the organization with extreme processing problems.

#### Solution

Drive Assist worked with Microsoft® partner TBS to develop a solution based on Windows Mobile® powered Pocket PCs. A TBS application called TaskMaster integrates with Drive Assist's Vehicle Hire Management System (VHMS).

#### Benefits

- Reduces the processing burden.
- Fuel consumption decreased by 2.5 million miles a year.
- Frees up vehicle fleet by 15 per cent.
- Drivers can reach clients with in Service Legal Agreements.

## Mobile Solution Helps Credit Hire Car Service Eliminate 120,000 Paper Forms a Month

“We can now offer a more dynamic service to our business providers. The solution has made us leaner. It ensures that we can operate a two-hour delivery service right across the U.K.”

Nigel Bardsley, Operations Director, Drive Assist

Rapid growth at U.K. credit-hire car service Drive Assist left the company in need of a solution to help it deal with the tens of thousands of paper forms processed monthly. Drive Assist deployed Windows Mobile® powered Pocket PCs running the TBS TaskMaster field mobility solution to its 500 drivers. The drivers use TaskMaster, which is integrated with ALK CoPilot satellite navigation, on the devices to locate clients quickly. They can now receive jobs while in the field, and input information from inspections directly on the device, which is sent in real time to the organisation's back-end system. The processing burden of 120,000 paper forms a month has been eliminated and drivers are now able to optimise their routes and conserve fuel to help meet environmental targets.

## Situation

Each year, thousands of motorists are involved in road traffic accidents that are not their fault. Drive Assist offers a credit-hire car service to help people inconvenienced by these accidents by working with insurance companies to provide people with replacement cars. Drive Assist has 15 depots located throughout the U.K., which are controlled from a head office in Tamworth.

Since it was established in 1992, Drive Assist has achieved dramatic success. Its understanding of the market has helped it grow from a small business, to one with more than 1,000 employees and an annual turnover of £150 million (U.S. \$261 million). The business has 15,000 vehicles in its fleet, ranging from smaller cars to prestige models, and it carries out 20,000 vehicle deliveries or collections every month.

This immense growth over a very short time prompted Drive Assist to find a way to improve business efficiency and service. Nigel Bardsley, Operations Director, Drive Assist, says: "Paper-based processes were becoming cumbersome and time-consuming. Drivers had to pick up paper forms and jobs at depots every day. They had to print out Web maps and decipher them on the way to clients' addresses, which sometimes caused delays."

Paper forms, needed for the delivery, collection, and inspection of vehicles, created vast administration. With a quarter of a million collections or deliveries per year to document, and six paper forms associated with each movement, the organisation dealt with extreme processing problems. Drive Assist knew that lost forms could potentially result in a significant amount of car rental for which the business could not charge.

The organisation was also keen to improve the way the call centres communicated with

the 500 drivers in the field and to accelerate response times. "Some insurance companies demand that customers are provided with a vehicle within two hours of their call, anywhere in the country," says Bardsley. "This was difficult to maintain when we relied on the phone for locating drivers and relaying detailed information to drivers."

Employees also had to key in the details of paperwork into Drive Assist's Vehicle Hire Management System (VHMS), which logs vehicle movements, to generate invoices. Not only was this time-consuming, but mistakes sometimes led to costly errors and inaccuracies in the system.

The organisation needed to sustain its growth and become more efficient in the way that it supplied services to customers, clients, and business partners. It began to search for a solution that could integrate with VHMS, streamline the business, and reduce the extensive paperwork generated daily.

## Solution

The organisation chose to work with Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner TBS to develop a solution based on Windows Mobile® powered Pocket PCs. After a pilot phase, these were deployed to 500 delivery drivers, who run a TBS field mobility solution, called TaskMaster, which integrates with the company's VHMS back-end system.

Steve Reynolds, Managing Director, TBS, says: "The drivers use Vodafone VPx devices, which have a keyboard, integrated phone, and general packet radio services (GPRS) data communications. They run the TaskMaster smart client, which is integrated with ALK Technologies's CoPilot Live navigation software."

Now, at the start of each day, drivers receive jobs from the VHMS system, pushed out by the TaskMaster mobile gateway over the

Vodafone GPRS network, through to the device. The message instructs the driver to take a car to an address. When a driver accepts a job, the satellite navigation system calculates the estimated time of arrival (ETA) and sends it to the server so that call centre staff can feed the information back to the customer.

When the driver arrives at the customer's address, he conducts a vehicle inspection to identify any pre-existing damage to the vehicle. Using a process flow within TaskMaster, drivers can complete an inspection for damage, and fill in a form onscreen. The customer then signs on the device.

A runner in a second car takes the driver to pick up another car from a client. Previously, drivers would return cars back to a depot, where they would collect the paperwork for the next job. Now, they can take the collected car to the nearest carwash, and deliver it directly to the next customer.

"This is called a 'move on', which is significant to Drive Assist," says Reynolds.

"Never before have the business processes been efficient enough to successfully carry out move-on deliveries because until now, Drive Assist hasn't been able to dynamically push jobs out to drivers in the field."

TaskMaster is a smart client application. It sits on the Windows Mobile powered device and is driven by the data that is sent to it.

"We can make changes to the application over the air. This gives us flexibility in terms of the user interface and the way the information is presented to the driver," says Reynolds.

## Benefits

### Environmental Solution Eliminates 120,000 Paper Forms a Month

The solution has helped Drive Assist find effective ways to cut emissions and be more environmentally conscious. It has reduced the processing burden and inefficiency of handling 120,000 paper forms a month, which has also had a significant impact on operations.

"Previously, with 20,000 movements a month, and six pieces of paper per movement, we generated such a vast amount of paper that started to hold the company back from its progress," says Bardsley.

The environment also played a major part in the development of the handheld project. "The devices have helped us to optimise our fleet's efficiency," says Bardsley. Using the global positioning system (GPS) navigation on the device, drivers can plan optimised routes from job to job. "The fuel savings are significant, at around 2.5 million miles per year. Thanks to this reduction in mileage, we have significantly cut emissions."

Bardsley also says that move-on collections and deliveries free up 15 per cent of the fleet. As a result, assets worth £20 million (U.S.\$35.29 million) are released back into the business. "Around 2,000 cars of our 15,000-strong fleet are now available to use for business growth without investing in new resources," he says.

### Helps the Organisation Meet Two-Hour SLAs

Before the mobile solution was deployed, drivers were issued with road maps, delivery and collection details, and inspection forms, which they had to study. This process was time consuming and confusion with directions often led to delivery delays. GPS navigation on the devices combined with clear instructions at drivers' fingertips help them to reach the client on time.

“Previously, move-on deliveries made up just one per cent of the business. Now, Drive Assist is predicting that move-on deliveries will make up 75 per cent of the business.”

Nigel Bardsley, Operations Director, Drive Assist

The company’s 200 call centre staff can now access real-time information direct from the field, which helps them inform customers and business partners of delivery times or potential problems. “Should the driver’s ETA change, we can send the updated time through the TaskMaster software to warn the call centre, which, in turn, keeps the customer informed,” says Reynolds.

Bardsley says: “We can now offer a more dynamic service to our business providers. The solution has made us leaner. It ensures that we can operate a two-hour delivery service right across the U.K.”

#### **Increases Driver Efficiency and Streamlines Business**

Now able to carry out move-on collections and deliveries, drivers can plan their journey efficiently and reduce their mileage. “Previously, move-on deliveries made up just one per cent of the business,” says Bardsley. “Now, Drive Assist is predicting that move-on deliveries will make up 75 per cent of the business.”

The use of paper maps forced drivers to stay within their territory boundaries so they didn’t get lost or travel too far away from base. Now, they can travel further a field. GPS navigation ensures they can easily find their way to or from any address, and the call centres can communicate with them in real time to pass on any information they might need.

Information accuracy has also improved. Before, drivers often returned with signatures or paperwork missing. “We built the TaskMaster functions around existing workflow processes and use logic and mandatory questions in the application to ensure that drivers validate and complete the required information,” says Reynolds.

Drivers in the field also benefit from accurate information. Call centre operatives enter the

details of new jobs onto the VHMS system, which are pushed out to the targeted driver. They can access all the details they need, such as what type of inspection to undertake, the location of the car, and how they get there stress-free.

#### **Easy to Use for Fast Adoption**

During the development of a prototype, TBS worked closely with drivers to emulate their workflow for delivering and inspecting vehicles. A series of drop-down menus and pick lists guides them intuitively through each process.

Bardsley says: “Drivers are a contrasting range of ages and technical ability, so it was very important that the interface was easy to use. The solution is so intuitive that training normally takes as little as two hours and adoption has been fantastic.”

## For More Information

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[www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

For more information about Drive Assist products and services, visit the Web site at:  
[www.driveassist.co.uk](http://www.driveassist.co.uk)

For more information about TBS products and services, visit the Web site at:  
[www.mobiliseyourworkforce.co.uk](http://www.mobiliseyourworkforce.co.uk)

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## Windows Mobile

For more information about Windows Mobile powered Pocket PCs and Smartphones visit:  
[www.microsoft.com/mobile/enterprise](http://www.microsoft.com/mobile/enterprise)

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### Software & Services

- Windows Mobile 5.0 for Pocket PC Phone Edition
- Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003
- Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000

### Partners

- TBS
- Vodaphone
- ALK

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