

Delivering the Future

by Elmar Toime

Customers are demanding better service and lower costs and to meet this demand a couriers need greater visibility of their delivery routes and greater flexibility to add or deviate from those routes. These capabilities will enable the industry to answer customer queries more accurately, speed the delivery process, increase workforce productivity and ultimately create cost savings which can be passed on to customers. I believe that used correctly, mobile technology can respond to all these needs. For this reason I recently accepted a position on the non-executive committee of mobile solutions specialist, Blackbay.

A Blackbay customer, Parcelforce, is the perfect example of how mobile technology can help our industry develop. When they first investigated the technology they were looking to improve on their customer service by being able to provide quicker access to delivery and collection information, and offer greater flexibility to arrange ad hoc deliveries and collections whilst drivers were out on the road.

Having issued their workforce with the mobile devices, Parcelforce now run all collection and delivery information over them so no paper admin is required, updates can be made to delivery routes even after the driver has left the depot, and the depot and driver can communicate in real time so customer queries can be answered accurately. As a direct result of implementing mobile technology, Parcelforce has saved approximately £1.7 million per annum, that's £740 per driver, per year.

The first step for any business considering mobile technology is therefore to work out their Return on Investment (ROI) expectation and pin point the exact savings they could be making. Blackbay's ROI calculator is good place to start.

However, the benefits of using mobile technology don't stop at assisting current services and customer demands. In the next few years I expect to see some serious developments in services offered in response to market shifts and a mobile solution framework will be a pre-requisite to any courier wishing to offer them successfully. I expect to see specific growth in the higher value end of the market which will impact the level of tracking packets will require in transit. Blackbay can enable mobile devices to take a digital signature. This is then transmitted back to the server and can be accessed by depot staff should a customer wish to check who signed for their package. A customer can instantly be sent the digital signature should they wish to see proof of delivery. Using this solution Parcelforce, cut the time it took to view a delivery confirmation on their website from 3 days to 3 minutes.

In the longer term the industry will benefit from brand new services. I'm very firmly in favour dynamic delivery and flexible pricing; both of which are several steps closer to reality once a mobile framework is in place.

Dynamic delivery involves using intelligent tracking to provide delivery to where the recipient is now, not just a pre-fixed address given upon ordering.

Flexible pricing would allow a courier to sell and price services based on their knowledge of delivery densities in the drop off area of the customers' choice. The greater the number of deliveries to that area on that day, the lower the cost of the individual drop. To be able to assess the situation, the depot must have real time information about the whereabouts of their drivers - again, mobile devices are already proving how they could support a service of this

kind and as customer demands increase its vital that we as an industry respond with new and improved services such as this.

About Elmar Toime

Elmar Toime holds a non -executive director role with mobile solutions specialist, Blackbay. He is also an independent adviser to the postal sector, based on his broad experience as a senior executive in the industry for many years. Elmar was formerly the executive Deputy Chairman of Royal Mail Holdings plc and Chairman of the Royal Mail Management Board. He had group-wide responsibilities across Royal Mail and Post Office Ltd operations. In that period, he was also chairman of GLS, Royal Mail's European parcels distribution business. For more information on mobile solutions that could help your business please visit: www.blackbay.com