

Case Study



Gas Company Makes Customer Service a Priority with MWA Intelligence Application for BlackBerry Smartphones

Company: Alabama Gas Corporation

(Alagasco) is a division of Energen Corporation and the largest natural gas distributor in Alabama, providing clean-burning, energy-efficient natural gas to approximately 450,000 homes, businesses and industries.

Industry: Utilities

Region: Americas

Company Size: Large Enterprise
– 1,000 employees

Email Environment: Microsoft® Exchange

Type of Solution: Field Service/CRM
Dispatch Operations

BlackBerry Alliance Partner: Intelligent Service Management™ and Intelligent Workforce™ by MWA™ Intelligence, Inc.

Challenge: Alagasco wanted to upgrade from a paper-based system, used to dispatch and track service mechanics who provide gas service at customers' homes, to a wireless system where the process is automated, flexible and streamlined.

Solution: MWA Intelligence adapted a mobile service management solution designed to meet Alagasco's requirements. Service mechanics began using BlackBerry® smartphones to receive and respond to work orders faster and more efficiently, and their job status was wirelessly reported to the back-end system.

Alagasco's Results:

- Streamlines and improves service mechanic's job
- Increases Alagasco's productivity
- Enhanced customer satisfaction
- Improved resource utilization
- Increase in employee morale and job satisfaction



Utilities | Field Force | Business Case Study



The Challenge:

Automate Paper-based Dispatching to Streamline Business and Improve Customer Service

Alagasco sends service mechanics to people's homes to manage their gas service, including turning on and off service and responding to emergencies. They struggled with a dispatching system that relied on paper records and poor communications.

"Each morning, operations personnel had to come in at 4AM to print out the work orders for the day," says Lynn Lovelady, IT and PMO Director. "They tried to optimize the day's visits as best they could, but they only had radio communications to check on the service mechanic's progress during their shift."

As a result, service calls might not have been made on busy days, and when a call needed to be rescheduled, it had to wait until the next day.

Alagasco wanted to provide their customers better service. They also wanted to eliminate the slow and time consuming process of printing work orders by hand, then manually entering the data into their ERP system.

Why the BlackBerry Solution?

The management and IT teams at Alagasco were using BlackBerry smartphones for email and personal information management, so the company was already familiar and comfortable with the BlackBerry® Enterprise Solution.

Alagasco's management requested the solution to allow service mechanics to start their day from home to alleviate their dispatching headaches. Because of the manual system, service personnel were coming into the office to get their work orders.

The lightweight, portable aspect of BlackBerry smartphones was a real advantage to service personnel who often move around in small spaces. "Some big devices, like the ones couriers use, would be no good for our people who are crawling around in small spaces," says Lovelady. "We liked the easy to carry, rugged nature of the BlackBerry smartphones."

As part of the plan to deploy a wireless dispatching system, Alagasco gave their service mechanics a BlackBerry smartphone to try for six weeks. "The vast majority of them picked it up really quickly," says Lovelady. "Even employees not familiar with new technology found the devices easy to use."

"The MWA Intelligence solution on the BlackBerry smartphone has been transformational, not just for serving our customers, but in giving us the ability to contact our service mechanics in the event of an emergency."

~ LYNN LOVELADY, IT and PMO Director, Alagasco

Partner Profile:



Company: MWA Intelligence, Inc.

- Provides machine-to-machine (M2M) solutions and tools that are designed to support the exchange of information between hardware assets, mobile workers and key stakeholder
- Offers solutions and services that are customizable to various industries and vertical markets

Solution: Intelligent Service Management™ and Intelligent Workforce™

Application Type: Field Service/CRM Dispatch Operations

"MWA Intelligence is the most customer service oriented solution provider I've ever worked with. Anything we needed, they made themselves available and we continue to work with them to enhance the existing solution."

~ **Lynn Lovelady**, IT/PMO Director, Alagasco

For more information, visit www.mwaintelligence.com



More Service Calls, Better Service, Happier Technicians

Alagasco had their wireless partner, MWA Intelligence, Inc., adapt their existing solution to Alagasco's needs. They used Intelligent Service Management for back-end integration and Intelligent Workforce for the application on the BlackBerry smartphones.

The result was an application that dispatched work orders to service mechanics virtually automatically every day. It included built-in logic that used Microsoft MapPoint® to plot optimized routes so calls are made within a logically mapped geographical area. Service mechanics used the application to update their work during the day and close out jobs, so Alagasco could better communicate with their customers.

Alagasco is now much more capable of monitoring their service calls and adapting to the day's events. That translates into better customer service.

"Our interaction with customers is now so much more pleasant because we can get rough time estimates from our service mechanics and narrow the timeslot of our visits," says Lovelady. "We're also making better use of our service mechanic's time and they're probably making one extra visit per day. We have 300 service mechanics so that's about 300 extra visits."

They've also eliminated the time-consuming administrative work of manually creating service orders and updating reports at the end of each day. Now, the day's calls are sent to the back-end system, where they're updated. Any service calls that were missed are automatically rescheduled to the next day.

"The people who used to do this administrative job were reassigned to a different area of the business, where we had a need," says Lovelady.

The next project upgrade involves moving to an SAP system, which Lovelady believes will take the business impact to a new level.

Alagasco's Results

Streamlines and Improves Service Mechanic's Job: Service mechanics now get their work orders on their BlackBerry smartphones, which eliminates the need to come into the office as often and speeds up their work days.

Increases Productivity: Service mechanics are receiving work orders faster and in a more prioritized way, making it possible for them to make one extra service call per day, or over 300 extra calls overall.

Enhanced Customer Satisfaction: The newer, streamlined system has improved customer service so Alagasco can monitor how service mechanics are doing during the day and communicate with customers so they aren't waiting during long service call windows.

For additional BlackBerry customer success stories, visit www.blackberry.com/go/success

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Improved Resource Utilization: Administrative personnel who were manually inputting data from the older system have now been reassigned to areas of the business where their services are better utilized.

"Using BlackBerry smartphones with the MWA Intelligence solution has changed our business by giving us the ability to dispatch service mechanics more efficiently and serve our customers more effectively."

~ LYNN LOVELADY, IT and PMO Director, Alagasco

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