



Customer: Alumasc Precision Plc
Website: <http://www.alumasc-precision.co.uk>
Country or Region: United Kingdom
Industry: Manufacturing

Software and Services
• Windows Phone 8

Hardware
• Nokia Lumia 620

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Building and Engineering company saves costs and standardises on a single platform

" Swapping our 300 or so handsets from Blackberry to Windows Phone 8 was a no brainer; we have better devices that cost less and have increased functionality that has driven up staff efficiency and productivity."
Tony Scarvaci, IT Manager

As a leading premium building and precision engineering products company based in the UK, The Alumasc Group plc, wanted to standardise its technology onto a single platform to simplify management and save costs. Starting with the network, the company soon realised that a major consideration should be its mobile phone platform. Running multiple operating systems, handsets and support options was proving costly and inefficient, and employees were not seeing the major benefits mobile working can offer. This led to The Alumasc Group plc choosing Windows Phone 8 as its exclusive mobile platform, a move that means significant cost savings, as well as greater efficiency gains and improved mobile working techniques for its team of field staff.

Situation

A publically-listed company that turns over in excess of £100m, The Alumasc Group plc is made up of more than ten companies, gained through acquisition and organically spun off business units. While this provides a breeding ground for innovation and agility, it has also meant the group was running in silos, particularly when it came to technology platforms. The business units ran multiple networks, devices and operating systems, creating a time consuming and support-intensive technology estate for the IT team. The mobile strategy was based on ad hoc handsets for voice calls and Blackberry devices for email. This multiplicity of technology created inefficiencies among the employees at the company; documents were not easy to access for field staff and often employees would have to return to the office in order to complete paperwork

or email across supplementary documents to customers after meetings. Based over several sites, the 400 or so highly skilled engineers, designers, technicians and foundry staff rely on technology to help them communicate when out on site, when in the workshop or on the road. However, collaboration on content between staff was challenging. For example, if two or three members of a team worked on a proposal while in the office, the field sales engineer on his way to the potential new customer could then have difficulty opening this document on his smart phone, in order to check it before his meeting. Tony Scarvaci, IT Manager at Alumasc Precision Ltd, said there were also other fiscal inefficiencies. "We previously had Blackberry devices, but we realised that our executives only really used them for email – they didn't work for looking at

documents or collaborating with each other. Therefore, it was an expensive estate to maintain just for email, so we knew we needed to change.

The solution

After evaluating the entire technology estate, The Alumasc Group plc made the decision to standardise on one platform across the entire group. By adopting Microsoft Windows 8 in a cross-platform approach, the firm will have a single operating system across its devices, from smart phones, to tablets and eventually laptops and desktops. Starting with a Windows Phone 8 deployment on Nokia 620 handsets across the business, The Alumasc Group plc now has the confidence of knowing that any documents can be opened, viewed and shared by any employee, regardless of location, alongside the traditional email, voice and data benefits offered by the operating system. "Initially we were looking to replace just the Blackberry estate, and keep our other ad hoc mobile phones that we used predominantly for voice calls. But after our first site did the changeover we realised the number of advantages with Windows Phone 8, so we are now swapping all of our mobile devices to the platform," said Scarvaci. And, due to the cost advantage of Windows 8 Devices over and above Blackberry, it means the company has been able to equip more employees with mobile devices, eventually deploying an additional 100 handsets to users who would otherwise not have benefitted from mobile technology.

The benefits

The Alumasc Group plc is now exclusively based on the Microsoft platform. By standardising on a single operating system, The Alumasc Group plc has been able to save costs and drive greater productivity and efficiency among its staff.

More with less

Although standardisation across the business was the key driver for the project, cost savings were significant enough to have a major impact. The devices themselves were cheaper than the Blackberry devices, enabling the company to deploy more phones, for less cost. The

firm has already given 50 additional handsets to employees who previously used their own devices and expensed calls which were both time consuming and inefficient, and will eventually double this number, for less cost than the full Blackberry estate previously. Scarvaci said: "Swapping our 300 or so handsets from Blackberry to Windows Phone 8 was a no brainer; we have better devices that cost less and have increased functionality that has driven up staff efficiency and productivity."

Time saving for the IT team

One major advantage of the streamlining has been to free up the IT team to concentrate on using newer technologies, such as Office 365, to help drive business objectives. For example, the firm ran multiple servers just for its Blackberry devices, which was both costly and time consuming. By cutting down on the number of servers to maintain, there is less hardware to manage, patch and upkeep. Also training users on multiple technologies is now no longer required; the familiarity of Windows Phone means that most users have been able to simply take the device and use it immediately. Scarvaci confirms: "With everyone on the same device, it also means users train each other to a certain extent. There is always someone nearby who know how to do something you don't, so this has also helped to save the IT team time too. We have seen a dramatic decrease in the number of calls to our helpdesk from employees saying they can't do something." This familiarity has also helped to smooth the transition process – employees already feel like they know the technology, and so are more receptive to use it.

Increased functionality and choice

One valuable gain has been the productivity levels of staff increasing. Field staff are now able to access documents and information when on the move, helping to ensure they have the right information whenever and wherever they need it. By using Microsoft SkyDrive technology, a cloud-based storage repository, sales teams can update

projects, sales proposals or documents quickly and easily when they are out on the road so there is less time wasted. This has also helped to improve customer service. Sales teams can access whatever information required by the customer while at the meeting, demonstrating the expected efficiency of a leading premium building and precision engineering products company by its potential customers.

And, it's not just accessing documents and information on the move that has helped to drive productivity. Staff within The Alumasc Group plc have already started taking advantage of the Windows App Store, using an application that helps them to fill in their expense claims when out of the office. This is normally a laborious and time-consuming job that can now be done quickly, and in 'spare time' so individuals do not return to the office with a wallet full of unmanageable receipts.

Security embedded within the platform

Windows Phone 8 has also helped to give greater peace of mind to the IT team. Security options, such as Windows Phone 8 secure boot, which helps protect against malware and BitLocker device encryption, which encrypts the operating system and data files, so any file saved to the phone is encrypted automatically ensure the integrity of the device and therefore company information is protected. Scarvaci said: "It's another headache that I don't have to worry about, and helps me sleep a bit more easily." Rikke Rasmussen, Business Marketing Lead, Windows Phone UK at Microsoft, said: "By streamlining its technology platform, The Alumasc Group plc has been able to take advantage of the features within Windows Phone 8 and demonstrate to its customers why it has been at the forefront of the building and engineering sector for more than 60 years."