



Sending and receiving information in real time

Background

The British fashion retailer Hobbs is mobilising its area managers with JVC Mini Notebooks supplied by Handheld PCs.

Since opening the first store in Hampstead in 1982, Hobbs has grown into one of the most successful names in British female fashion. With over 40 stores throughout the UK and approximately 600 staff, senior management are regularly on the road, travelling from branch to branch and monitoring sales figures, staff welfare and performance.

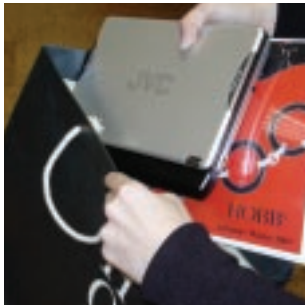
“The processes of staff appraisals, stock control and sales reviews are much simpler for the managers and for Head Office staff, who now don’t have to wait for information.”

Mike Spearing
Sales Director, Hobbs



The challenge

Hobbs’ area managers are never in one place for long. The six managers travel between seven branches each on a daily basis. Methods for keeping up to date and communicating whilst in transit or in-store were basic to say the least; the team managed with telephone and fax and pen and paper for recording information. When it came to producing sales reports and reviews, the lack of technology made work harder than it needed to be. Hobbs wanted to be able to provide all members of staff with quality information as soon as it became available.



“...Handheld PCs made an instant impression...”

Nigel Cowlshaw
IT Manager, Hobbs

Hobbs recognised the need for mobile technology that would allow the area managers to download their emails in real time from any branch. The mobile devices also needed to be big enough for them to clearly view and alter Microsoft™ Word documents and Microsoft Excel spreadsheets whilst being light and small enough for the predominantly female workforce to carry around in their handbags. Hobbs took a practical view when considering a solution; it recognised that, to encourage as much use as possible, the aesthetics of the computers had to be considered. The devices also had to be practical in size and appearance to promote use in public.

The solution

Hobbs’ first move was to find a compatible supplier that could offer independent advice on the type of solution that would fit the sales team’s specific requirements as well as offer continued post-purchase support. Nigel Cowlshaw, IT Manager for Hobbs, approached Handheld PCs as well as a number of other mobile computing suppliers. “I was looking for a company that would try to understand the need of the potential users rather than just assume we knew what we wanted. This is the first time we have tackled the issue

of mobilising staff and we needed someone who knew the market and would be able to identify the correct device for us. I was frustrated with some of the suppliers – many didn’t try to appreciate or address our needs – but Handheld PCs made an instant impression by making arrangements to meet not only with myself but also with Sales Director, Mike Spearing, and our team of area managers.”

Exploratory meetings between Hobbs’ Retail and IT departments and Handheld PCs unearthed the technical requirements. Handheld PCs was briefed on the company’s existing IT infrastructure and was then able to shortlist a number of mobile devices that were presented to the team for piloting.

Mike Spearing said, “Although we needed input on the type of product to suit our requirements, we were quite clear on the features that we didn’t need. Our area managers are carrying out a good deal of work on site but they don’t need the functionality of a PC. They are fundamentally using just three applications: Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word and Microsoft Outlook. We were also aware that we weren’t quite ready for a Wi-Fi® application. Handheld PCs understood this and didn’t try to steer us towards something that was beyond our basic requirement.”

Following the trials, Hobbs decided on the Mini Notebook from JVC – a versatile, A5-sized notebook PC, which incorporates Windows® XP Professional. Hobbs’ area managers spend much time away from their desks, but a lot of that time is spent in regional branches where they have access to a telephone line. Because of this, they don’t have the need for a wireless email solution – they can easily send and receive emails by logging on in-store.



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Nigel Cowlshaw continued, “The buying process was made very simple by Handheld PCs; they encouraged the people using the products to make an informed decision on what to purchase.”

After delivering the devices, Handheld PCs handled the implementation process and email configuration. Following deployment, its team was available to answer any questions the users had and to tackle any teething problems.

Cowlshaw concluded,

“We haven’t required any additional services from Handheld PCs since we started using the notebooks, as the service we received originally was thorough and professional.”

The results

After just five months Mike Spearing is already noticing the impact the notebooks are having on the area managers: “The managers are delighted with their new-found ability to send and receive emails on site. They no longer have to suffer the frustration of duplicating work by both handwriting and keying in information. The processes of staff appraisals, stock control and sales reviews are much simpler for the managers and for Head Office staff, who now don’t have to wait for information. Everyone in the company can send and receive information in real time.”

Handheld PCs has recently introduced Hobbs to its latest product offering, Wireless Mail and the Xdall powered by O2. Hobbs is now trialling both products and expects to introduce it to the general work-force in the near future.

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Mike Spearing
Sales Director, Hobbs



System Specification

JVC Mini Notebook Specification

Model name

MP-XP731GB

Shipment

November 2003

OS

Windows XP Professional Edition..SP1.

CPU – Processor

Ultra Low Voltage Intel Pentium-M

CPU – Clock

1GHz

Bus clock speed

400MH

Secondary cache memory

1MB

Chipset

Intel 855GM

Graphics accelerator

Intel 855GM Integrated graphics chip

Video memory

Share system memory max 64MB

Main memory – Standard

256MB

Main memory – On board

256MB

Main memory – Max

512MB

Extended memory slot (available slot)

MicroDIMM.DDR266.slot x1.1.

Hard disk

40GB

Built-in monitor – Screen size

8.9" Low Temperature Poly Silicon TFT liquid crystal (backlit)

Built-in monitor – Resolution

1024x600, 16M colors.MAX2048.1536,16M colors (PANNING MODE)

External monitors

800x600 – 2048.1536, 16M colors

Sound

Built-in stereo speakers

Wireless LAN

1 (IEEE802.11b)

Interface – Mini VGA port

1

Built-in monitor – RJ-11 phone jack

1

Built-in monitor – USB port

2 (USB 2.0)

Built-in monitor – IEEE1394 port

1

Built-in monitor – LAN jack

1 (100BASE-TX/10BASE-T)

Built-in monitor – Microphone-in jack

1

Built-in monitor – Headphone-out jack

1 (stereo)

Built-in monitor – PC card slot

1 (TypeII)

Keyboard – Key pitch

16.mm

Keyboard – Key stroke

1.5mm

Pointing device

Stick type

Battery operation (JEITA1.0)

– Built-in battery

Approx. 2.0h (1.8h)

Battery operation (JEITA1.0)

– Built-in + standard battery pack

Approx. 5.5h (5.0h)

Battery operation (JEITA1.0)

– Built-in + Optional battery pack

Approx. 9.5h (8.5h)

Battery charging time (OFF time)

– Built-in battery

Approx. 0.8h (80%) Approx. 1.4h (100%)

Battery charging time (OFF time)

– Built-in + standard battery pack

Approx. 1.2 (80%) Approx. 2.3h (100%)

Battery charging time (OFF time)

– Built-in + optional battery pack

Approx. 2.5 (80%) Approx. 4.8h (100%)

Dimensions

(W)225. (H)29.5. (D)152 mm

(W)225. (H)29.5. (D)177 mm (with standard battery pack)

Weight

Approx. 905g

Approx. 1075g

(with standard battery pack)

Additional software – Applications

PINNACLE STUDIO 8 SE

ImageMixer with VCD1.1

Easy Network Changer

Norton AntiVirus 2003

Adobe Reader

RealOne Player

CC Converter

Microsoft Outlook Express 6

Microsoft Internet Explorer 6

Windows Media Player 9

Windows Movie Maker 2

Windows Messenger

Windows Netmeeting

Additional software – Drivers

USB Driver.Mass Storage/Stream

G.726 Decoder

PD-TS decoder

Accessories (in the PC package)

External Display adapter

AC adapter

Li-ion Standard battery pack

2 Application CD-ROMs

modem cable

telephone adapter

2 stick caps

Instruction manual

Accessories (in the SET package)

DVD-ROM & CD-R/RW DRIVE

PORT REPLICATOR

USB SD READER/WRIER