



Success Stories

The Client

Ecolab Products of Tucson, AZ is a division of a very large company. With route drivers across the country, Ecolab was still hand-writing tickets and faxing in orders.

Ecolab needed a solution that would reduce clerical labor and expedite route sales and delivery processes. Ecolab also needed a solution that would not be the tradition six-figure, rigid and long implementation cycle project.

The Diagnosis

Running a highly modified Unix product called FACTs, Jeff Gruber (systems manager) contacted MCNi after being referred to MCNi by a common customer.

With a reasonable proposal in hand and one-week implementation timeframe, Ecolab pulled the trigger.

The Strategy

Ecolab's internal consultant, along with MCNi's installer came up with a strategy to link the two systems through a common data warehouse. The synchronization procedures between the two systems were written and set to run automatically daily.

With a working prototype in hand after a couple of days on-site, one driver in Los Angeles was chosen to test the system. A one-day ride-along proved the system to be perfect for distributing Ecolab's products.

The MCNi Solution

Over the next couple of weeks, Ecolab rolled out the product to all of their route drivers nationwide. These drivers all deliver products during the day and then remotely synchronize via dial-up at night.

The Route Management system, running on Pocket PC's is used as a complete information center for drivers. When a driver selects the next stop or cold-call on the list, he can get directions and any notes attached to the client. At the stop, an odometer reading is entered and the automatic timer is started to track the time spent at the customer's location.

At the end of the day, the driver need not even come back to the office. Using CompactFlash 56k modem cards, the drivers dial in from home and upload their tickets in just minutes. At the same time, adjusted inventory numbers and new assignments are transferred to the hand-held computer.

The Software

The route software, written in VBCE, runs on a 266mhz Compaq Ipaq PPC with 64 megs of memory and running Windows CE. Orders and invoices are synchronized along with inventory replenishment requests and transfers using Microsoft ActiveSync 3.6 and CompactFlash modems. The dial in computer runs ActiveSync and Microsoft's Dial-in Server software.

The Route Controller software runs on a Dell workstation connected to an Win2k network. All access to data is accomplished via tightly integrated functions developed at MCNI and requires no export/import procedures in and out of FACTS.

The Setup

The delivery vans run Compaq IPAQ Pocket PC's and print on Okidata Microline 320 printers connected via a serial port. Power is supplied with a \$60 300watt power inverter.