

Case Study – Retail Distribution Group plc

Introduction

Retail Distribution Group (RDG) is a national food and drink distribution company with six regional distribution centres and a large fleet of delivery vehicles. Infracast have been working with RDG for three years on a series of projects with the specific goal of enhancing customer service at the same time as reducing costs. RDG have embraced mobile communications across their entire operation for contact with customers, staff and suppliers.

RDG and its subsidiaries have implemented Managed Text, Infracast's core product, throughout the business and the branded web clients are used by a wide range of staff. However it is with two specialist applications (Location Based Vehicle Tracking and Sales Force Management) that Infracast have been able to bring their expertise and experience to bear to generate significant efficiencies for RDG.

Case Study Uses of Managed Text

RDG uses Managed Text for a huge range of both customer, internal and supplier contacts and the following examples are intended to give a flavour of the range and impact of some of their uses.

Core Outbound SMS messaging

Much of RDG's messaging is straightforward outbound contact with their customers and staff using Managed Text's simple address book, distribution lists and templates as well as batch file uploads. These outbound SMS messages cover a wide range of different processes across the Bank's operations:

- Delivery slot reminders
- Delivery slot change alerts
- Out of stock alerts
- Shift confirmation and reminders
- BCP incident messaging and automated escalation
- Sales force appointment reminders
- Marketing campaigns
- Debt payment reminders
- Company results announcements

Simple Push SMS messages are very effective way of driving sales and reducing costs throughout the business:

- Sales force appointment reminders have reduced customer 'no shows' by 30% significantly improving particularly add on and repeat purchasing
- Replacing mailouts with SMS routinely reduces costs by over 90%
- Average debt age has been reduced by 10% with payment reminders

- Delivery reminders and out of stock alerts have substantially reduced enquiry calls to the contact centre, significantly reducing costs and allowing the operators to focus on the longer higher value or higher risk calls.

Interactive Services

Interactive services typically require the customer or member of staff to reply using a keyword, this simple mechanism can be used in a host of different ways and the replies can be routed depending on the keyword:

- Registering interest for a marketing message (e.g. with replies routed to outbound operators as leads)
- Confirmation or cancellation of a delivery
- Confirmation or cancellation of a sales appointment
- Stock availability check
- Requests to fill shifts or overtime

More complex interactive services allow members of the RDG IT to log on to operational servers using SMS based two part authentication with a significant cost saving over their previous key-fob method:

- **Two part authentication** – the member of staff requests access using a keyword; an SMS is sent with one-time authentication key; member of staff logs on to secure server using one-time key.

Sales Force Management

Working closely with RDG's IT team, Infracast have implemented a low cost sales force management application. RDG wanted to improve reporting from their Sales Managers in order to monitor the range and effectiveness of their calls, and to create a real time view of their activity. RDG also wanted to deliver a benefit to their sales team – no more end of day admin!

The solution allows each Sales Manager to text a brief summary of each visit as soon as it is complete using a pre-defined format. For example a visit to an existing customer:

E.SalesManagerID.CustomerID.Typeofvisit.SalesValue.FreeText

These messages are routed to a database and parsed. If the message is received and understood then an acknowledgement SMS is returned to the Sales Manager confirming receipt.

The populated data is then accessed through a web client with a simple user interface and rich reporting and analysis tools. The Area and Regional Managers can now review the activity of their teams in real time with simple drill down and, critically, redirect their teams on a daily basis if necessary, in response to changing circumstances. As well as allowing daily monitoring of the sales force's performance and therefore closer tracking against targets, the solution has also triggered more active coaching and support.

The solution makes use of the sales force's existing handsets and so RDG needed no new investment to achieve their goal. Because the interface is web based the information is accessible to any member of the sales team from anywhere, so the Sales Managers now use their end of day admin time to check their own performance and plan future meetings. RDG have not been able to assess the exact impact of SMS based sales force management because of other changes, however their estimate is a 15% improvement in effectiveness (visits and sales per Sales Manager).



RDG are now extending this approach to other parts of their business with remote teams.

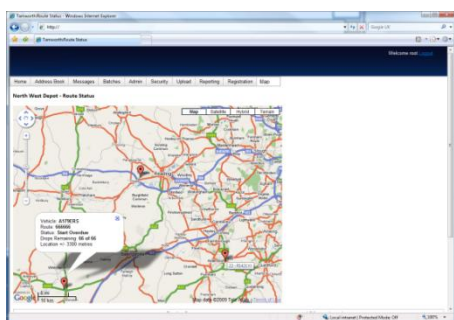
Location Based Vehicle Tracking

Following the success of the sales force management application RDG asked Infracast to develop a mobile based vehicle tracking system as an alternative to investing in full GPS for their delivery fleet. The solution combines data from RDG's delivery scheduling system with Location Based Services (LBS) data from the in-cab mobile handsets and presents the results using a standard mapping API.

Each delivery vehicle's route is planned and the vehicle loaded in the correct order. The first level of tracking is provided by the driver texting the drop number with a keyword (using a pre-defined format in the same way as the sales force management application) on completion of each delivery.

Route	Status	Reg No	Start	Total Drops	Drop Left	Adj.	10:30	12:30	14:30	Driver Comments	Drop Comments	Call Log
300	On	SUSTON	09:13	29	9	9	9	9	9	EROP 9		
305	On	SUSTON	09:13	20	15	15	15	15	15	EROP 15		
310	Problem	WINDSOR	08:00	24	24	0	0	0	0			
315	Completed	SFDLPH	08:00	21	0	15	0	0	0	FINISH 15:00pm-2		
320	Problem	WINDSOR	08:00	22	22	0	0	0	0			

The second level of tracking is provided by periodic LBS lookups of the in-cab mobile handset. These can be triggered automatically or individually to check a vehicle's current location.



The mapping interface shows the location of all the delivery vehicles in an area and RAG reports show delivery vehicles' progress against their schedules.

Managers can now proactively re-route and re-schedule, resulting in fewer missed deliveries and substantially reducing the impact of congestion.

Even though the tracking data is not continuous RDG have found, in practice, that it is more than sufficient to drive the efficiency gains they sought. And once again RDG were able to implement an effective solution without investment in new hardware.

Summary

Managed Text, with the sales force management and delivery vehicle tracking applications, is now an integral part of RDG's operations, providing low cost solutions delivering benefits comparable with best in breed systems.