



Windows Mobile Customer Solution Case Study

Nicholas J Humphreys

ESTATE AGENTS AND LETTING AGENTS

Customer: Nicholas J. Humphreys
Web Site: www.digs2let.com
Customer Size: 35
Country or Region: United Kingdom
Industry: Real estate rentals and sales
Partner: BMS Digital Solutions

Customer Profile

Nicholas J. Humphreys is the largest real estate rental agency in the Midlands area of England. The ten-year-old company is headquartered in Leicestershire and has nine offices.

Software and Services

- Windows Mobile 6
- Windows Small Business Server 2003
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 SP2
- Microsoft Office 2007
 - Microsoft Office Outlook 2007

Hardware

- HTC S710 Smartphone

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Realtor Boosts Efficiency, Competitiveness with Mobility and Messaging

“Nowadays you can literally stick a client’s house on the market while you’re sitting in their living room. The photos get published on our Web site at least 8 to 12 hours sooner than they did before.”

Nick Humphreys, CEO, Nicholas J. Humphreys

To stay competitive, realtor Nicholas J. Humphreys (NJH) needed a more efficient way for employees to send and receive information while on the road, and to synchronize data between their smartphones and the office. With Windows Mobile® 6, Windows® Small Business Server, and Microsoft® Exchange Server, NJH employees save time and communicate more efficiently. NJH is now at the cutting edge of technology in its market.

Business Needs

As the largest real estate rental agency in the Midlands area of England, Nicholas J. Humphreys (NJH) needs to stay on top of the latest technology to compete in the highly competitive student and professional markets. “The landlords are going to use the agent that’s got all the tricks and whistles and bells, and we want to be leading the way,” says Nick Humphreys, Managing Director of NJH.

Humphreys spends a great deal of time meeting with landlords and taking pictures of their properties. He needs to get the photos into his computer, attach them to property information, and make them available to prospective renters as quickly as possible.

Previously, Humphreys used a digital camera to snap photos. Upon returning to his office hours later, he would download the photos using a USB cable, link the photos to his real estate line-of-business (LOB) software to create information sheets on the properties, and post them for prospective renters. It was a time-consuming, manual process that kept Humphreys tied to the office.

Next, Humphreys tried using a Blackberry device to take pictures and access his e-mail, as well as to keep his busy calendar and task list updated while on the road. But his office’s e-mail and calendaring were based on Windows® Small Business Server, Microsoft® Exchange Server, and Microsoft



Office programs. Humphreys found that the BlackBerry didn't fully integrate with them. "He was keeping two calendars, effectively," said Steve Wright of BMS Digital Solutions, the company that manages NJH's IT system. "If he made a calendaring change on the BlackBerry, when he got back to the office, he'd have to manually transfer that information into Microsoft Office Outlook®."

Humphreys wanted a mobile solution that would be more compatible with his e-mail system, and make it easier to update online property information with photos.

Solution

BMS Digital Solutions designed a solution that combines Windows Mobile®-based devices with Windows Small Business Server and Exchange Server. Now, Humphreys uses an HTC S710 smartphone (with a built-in camera) running Windows Mobile 6. The office uses Windows Small Business Server 2003 (R2) with Service Pack 2 for Exchange Server 2003, which facilitates the use of push e-mail technologies and the ability to synchronize calendaring and tasks between the office and the Windows Mobile phones.

Because Windows Mobile integrates with the Microsoft Office Outlook messaging and collaboration client, NJH employees can now send photos of properties via Exchange Server directly to the real estate application they are using on their desktops. Their appointment calendars are completely synchronized between their Windows Mobile phones and their desktop computers at the office.

"The Windows Mobile device connects to Exchange Server and holds the connection open," Wright explains. "As soon as Exchange Server notices a change, it pushes it out. When somebody in the office schedules a

calendar event for an employee, it immediately appears on the Windows Mobile device without their doing anything else."

With the ability to connect Windows Mobile devices to Exchange Server, Humphreys benefits in other ways. "If Humphreys were to lose his device or somebody stole it, we can 'remote wipe' the device for him, so he can protect sensitive data," Wright says. Plus, Exchange Server keeps a full audit trail of company e-mail. "Previously, there was no centralized control or backup of the employees' e-mail sent from their devices at all. Now, all e-mails sent and received are fully backed up," Wright added.

"The other nice thing is that you can put company registration or other information in a footer directly within Exchange Server, so that every time an e-mail is sent out, it includes it, regardless of which device it's from," says Wright.

Humphreys has purchased eight Windows Mobile-based smartphones for his employees, and expects to upgrade all 35 of his company's devices by the end of 2008.

Benefits

Using Windows Mobile with Windows Small Business Server and Exchange Server, NJH employees are saving time, communicating better, and working more efficiently. The company is boosting its competitive advantage.

Time Savings

NJH employees are able to update the real estate property information on the company Web site much more quickly and directly. "Nowadays, you can literally stick a client's house on the market while you're sitting in their living room," says Humphreys. "The

photos get published on our Web site at least 8 to 12 hours sooner than they did before."

Improved Communication, Increased Efficiency

Getting e-mails "pushed" to the smartphone by Exchange Server as they come in means that staff can get more work done. "You could be out of the office all morning and receive 40 e-mails, but you can respond to 25 of those before you get back with a simple yes or no," Humphreys says.

Humphreys likes that he can flexibly control the push e-mail from his smartphone. "When I'm in England, I set the phone to collect e-mails constantly, but when I'm abroad, because it costs more to connect, I tend to collect them every half an hour."

Boosts Competitive Advantage

Using Windows Mobile, Humphreys has changed how he markets rentals. "Because of the smartphones, we're able to offer marketing aspects on rentals that would previously have been reserved for sales," Humphreys says.

"In sales, it would be commonplace for you to offer a floor plan, detailed description, internal photographs, etc. In rentals, it's a far more fast-moving business, so you would simply take a photograph and write a brief description," he adds.

"Now, we can collect all the same information for rentals and send it back to the office while we're sitting in the car. We're at the leading edge of technology in this market," Humphreys concludes.