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Making the service flow

With a team of around 130 engineers and 450 merchandisers responsible for operating and maintaining over 28,000 machines in the UK and Ireland, Vendepac devotes considerable attention to looking at new ways of delivering the best service to customers.

Providing its engineers with the information they need in the quickest and most efficient way possible is a constant challenge. This is where the company's ongoing relationship with Interchange Group, specialists in providing mobile communications for field service, comes in. Three years ago, Interchange implemented a new service solution for the business.

By linking in with the Cognito mobile data solution which Vendepac's engineers already had in place, the new system enabled much closer and more efficient communications between both the engineers and merchandisers on the road as well as the company's call centre. At the same time, the system also facilitated closer contract administration.

Also, through interface with Vendepac's Tetra CS/3 accounting solution the system enabled invoicing and purchasing procedures to be more tightly controlled. Recently Interchange installed an upgraded version of its original solution to further improve Vendepac's service offering.

Now, at Vendepac's Customer Care Centre in Basingstoke, a team of 18 controllers log calls onto the Interchange computer system which holds all client records. As soon as a call is logged, it is given a unique reference number and a message is automatically generated to the mobile data teams via pager or Cognito.

Service calls simply requiring replenishment of stock for vending machines, are handled solely by the merchandisers. However, if the request is unclear, merchandisers initiate the first customer contact and then use the mobile technology to forward information direct to the engineers as necessary.

Where a customer reports a problem needing an engineer's urgent attention to the Customer Care Centre, it has the ability to communicate so quickly with the mobile teams, that it means in most cases, engineers will be on a customer's site within four hours.

Stephen Evers, Information Systems Manager at Vendepac, said: "We use Interchange's solution in a number of different areas, including technical call management and in liaising with our engineers who are handling customer repairs.

It means that we have three-way communications between the customer and the engineer via the call centre, ensuring that the information our engineers need to get the customer up and running is delivered as efficiently as possible."

In addition, the use of remote technology and the service solution behind it means that once a job is finished engineers can input the relevant information into the system while they are still on site and close the job before moving onto the next one.

Working alongside the engineers, Interchange's experts have developed a bespoke solution for the electronic forms that the engineers need to complete, reducing the amount of form filling which needs to be done and streamlining the flow of information. They have also helped Vendepac exploit its financial software, speeding up routine invoicing and processing procedures.