



CASE STUDY

The AA with Toughpad FZ-G1

The AA Improves Patrol Communications, Vehicle Diagnostics and Customer Service with Panasonic Toughpad tablets and customised docking solution

Client: AA

Location: United Kingdom

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When the AA upgraded its mobile technology to the Panasonic Toughpad FZ-G1 rugged tablets and docking solution, the business saw multiple business and customer service benefits as well as improved efficiency for their users.



When the UK's largest recovery breakdown service decided to refresh the mobile technology for its 3000 patrols to improve communications and customer service, the AA chose Panasonic's rugged Toughpad FZ-G1 tablets and its vehicle docking solution.

Improving communications and connectivity

The AA had successfully been using Panasonic Toughbook CF-19 rugged notebooks to help patrols respond to the average 10,000 daily breakdown calls that they receive but after improvements to its central mobile application, the company was keen to upgrade the technology and vehicle docking solution to take advantage of new functionality. In particular, the AA wanted to improve the connectivity and communication capability of the device and improve the service patrols could offer customers during a call out.

The Panasonic Toughpad device is the primary tool for patrols when responding to breakdown calls. The patrols accept jobs via the device, locate the breakdown using GPS and let the customer service centre know when they have arrived on site. The G1 also interfaces with the AA's vehicle diagnostic tool to help fault find in the field. AA Technicians can also search online for specialist knowledge, order replacement parts before completing the task and closing the job; and communicate information and extra services to clients whilst assisting them.

Challenges to overcome

"One of the historical challenges for the patrols was securing a mobile data connection for the devices in some remote locations. This could delay the recording and reporting of information during call outs or the ordering of new parts," explained Mark Dawson, the Transformation Programme Manager for Road Operations for the AA. "Moving forward, the improved connectivity was even more important for some of the enhanced customer services we were offering and to speed repair times. For example, now on a call out, the customer email address is taken and a comprehensive summary report is automatically sent to the customer. Customers can also electronically sign for new or replacement parts at the roadside. All these activities help to improve the quality and speed of our service."

Lasting longer

The AA conducted a thorough assessment of the mobile devices on the market and ultimately chose the Panasonic Toughpad FZ-G1 tablet for a number of reasons.

"Our application is now designed for a touchscreen interface, so it was important for us to move to a tablet or touchscreen device of some kind," said Mark.

"Our staff are experts in fixing cars, not IT, so the solution had to be easy to use, lightweight and well designed and tough enough to be thrown around. The Panasonic Toughpad FZ-G1 tablet was very intuitive to use and with its Windows 8.1 operating system was designed for touchscreen and it knitted very well with our application. Although the Panasonic was not the cheapest device we tested, we knew that based on our experience with the Panasonic Toughbook CF-19 notebooks that they would last longer in the field and were well worth the additional investment. The standard three-year warranty with an option to extend to four and five years underlined this to us."

Custom designed slim dock

With a field test of more than 200 devices, the improved 3G and 4G connectivity was proved. The final important element in the decision was the offer by Panasonic to custom design, build and crash test a slim vehicle docking solution for the devices that could be fitted to the eight different vehicles used by the AA patrols.

The Panasonic Global Docking Solutions and Professional Services team designed the new slim docking solution from the ground up. Designed to be mounted on the dashboard of the vehicles, it was important that the dock could be swivelled for the device to face the operator or the curb side of the vehicle. Other important requirements incorporated into the design were a pass through antenna to improve connectivity to mobile networks and a connection for an external GPS module for maps to locate customers. Access to multiple ports on the device, such as LAN and VGA were also included.

The dock was designed for one-handed insertion of the device with latch and lock options and was tested to 30,000 plus insertion and removals. Standard Vesa 75 mounts were used in the design of the product to enable off-the shelf replacement parts to be used when required.

All appropriate crash safety, head impact and vibration testing was then undertaken by Panasonic to ensure the docking solution was as rugged as the Toughpad tablets themselves.

Panasonic Professional Services was also contracted by the AA to manage the installation of the docking solution in all 3,000 vehicles, over a three-month period, with a 99.8% first time success rate.

NetMotion recommendation

In addition to the latest Panasonic devices, the AA patrols have also been equipped with a smartphone. To assist with the reliable connectivity of these devices, Panasonic recommended the use of NetMotion's Mobile Performance Management (MPM) software to improve connectivity and productivity for the workforce when using the smartphones in the field.

An enhanced service

"Alongside our application upgrades, the deployment of the Panasonic Toughpad devices and the docking solution have resulted in some terrific improvements for our customers, patrols and the business," concluded Mark. "The latest Panasonic solution is much easier for our patrols to use and has been very well received. Connectivity has been much improved, meaning a smoother experience for the customer and faster response and fix times during call-outs. All these improvements combine to significantly enhance the service we offer."

New benchmark for rugged tablets

The fully rugged Toughpad FZ-G1 tablet with Windows 8.1 sets the new benchmark for outdoor viewable tablets making it ideal for field workforces in outdoor scenarios. With its capacitive, 10-finger multi-touch display and digitizer pen and flexible configurable ports this device can be used to view high definition documentation and images in the field whilst benefitting from connectivity options to ensure data is always available when needed.

