

Huge savings and flexibility for Lowri Beck thanks to MapMechanics and NAVTEQ team-up on routing system



A new routing and scheduling system from MapMechanics, which uses regularly updated and verified NAVTEQ maps, has resulted in **huge business savings** for Lowri Beck Services, Britain's longest-established independent specialist in the field of meter-reading.

Challenge

Lowri Beck, which handles meter reading for many well-known electricity, gas and water suppliers, had its own software to manage its operations and a GPRS-based mobile data system to deliver details of visits to its home based meter readers.

However, with the old system it took time for operatives to sort and plan their own journeys each week, which reduced the operation's flexibility. Also, it did not allow those visiting over 100 urban premises a day to plan the most efficient routes between call points.

Solution

MapMechanics supplied and supported the main components of an efficient new system tailored to their needs – TruckStops, the leading routing and scheduling system, and GeoConcept, the powerful geographic information system.

Lowri Beck's Oracle-based in-house management system now feeds call requests to GeoConcept and the company's routing team uses the software to group them interactively on a high quality map from NAVTEQ, mostly using postcodes. NAVTEQ maps are valued for being updated regularly and verified in the field.

Calls are passed to TruckStops, which schedules them according to various constraints. The schedules are fed via the GPRS server directly to handheld terminals or PDAs carried by the operatives. These pre-structured schedules save them hours of journey planning. TruckStops can be re-run at any time, so Lowri Beck could amend its schedules daily.

Bob Vernon, Managing Director of Lowri Beck said: "We like the fact that both TruckStops and GeoConcept are modular and configurable and integrate well with existing systems."



THE CHALLENGE

Supply a routing and scheduling system that:

- allows meter readers to reach destinations quickly and accurately
- reduces the time spent planning their movements
- saves costs
- improves productivity and competitiveness
- integrates with existing systems.

THE SOLUTION

MapMechanics' route and scheduling system, which offers:

- TruckStops routing and scheduling
- the GeoConcept geographic information system
- Accurate maps from NAVTEQ valued for their data quality, rich attribution, comprehensive and reliable street level data.

THE BENEFITS

- Fast, efficient dispatch of meter-readers to the right destination
- Time and cost savings
- Maximised efficiency of delivery routes
- Easy integration with existing systems
- Enhanced flexibility.

Benefits

The system is now planning the routing of over 10,000 visits a day and has delivered huge business savings. Meter readers are reaching their destinations more quickly and spending less time planning their movements.

The system has also helped Lowri Beck compete on a more equal footing with other, larger meter-reading organisations.

Much of Lowri Beck's work involves special reads and 'cycle' visits – occasional calls made on demand or according to a plan – rather than blanket readings.

"Other companies might be reading 60 per cent of the meters in a street, but we might be reading only two or three, so travel is a big cost element for us, which puts extra pressure on us to organize journeys efficiently," added Bob. "MapMechanics has really helped here."

Lowri Beck plans to extend its use of the MapMechanics system, such as automating the whole planning process, and to use geoConcept as a visual and analytical tool.

About MapMechanics

With over 20 years experience in map based technology, the innovative MapMechanics team continues to develop powerful new solutions to location based optimisation. The company's product range includes efficient routing, scheduling, territory optimisation and field force planning software, together with geographical information systems and map based digital data.

MapMechanics provides reliable solutions for real business challenges drawing on its established international product portfolio including world-renowned TruckStops routing and scheduling system, the comprehensive suite of GeoConcept map based analysis and display technology, a catalogue of thousands of branded data products and a wide range of unique optimisation applications.

For more information, visit www.mapmechanics.com.

About NAVTEQ

NAVTEQ is a leading provider of comprehensive digital map information for automotive navigation systems, mobile navigation devices, Internet-based mapping applications, and government and business solutions. NAVTEQ creates the digital maps and map content that power navigation and location-based services solutions around the world. The Chicago-based company was founded in 1985 and has approximately 2,200 employees located in 144 offices in 27 countries.

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Other features

Lowri Beck's handheld units are mostly Intermec Color 760 terminals and iMate PDAs - both running under the Windows Mobile operating system.

"Standard PDAs are more fragile than ruggedised terminals," said Managing Director Bob Vernon. "But they are much less expensive, and tend to be more readily available. We find it pays to dual-source."

"The routes taken by our operatives are now the shortest and the 'best fit' for their workload. They are freed from the time-consuming task of planning their own routes, which means we are performing much more efficiently."

Bob Vernon
Managing Director, Lowri Beck



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