



Battistella Administradora de Consórcios [Battistella Consortium Administrator]

Pocket PC in .NET brings agility to Battistella's sales force

Focused on the marketing of buildings and automobiles, Battistella was looking for a more agile and flexible system to improve communications between the sales force and the company. With the aid of .NET and the Pocket PC, the team improved time and increased productivity by 20%.

The situation

Marketing automobiles and buildings is the core business of Battistella Administradora de Consórcios, one of the 13 companies of the Battistella Conglomerate. With its main headquarters in São Paulo, two business units - in Lajes, Santa Catarina, and in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais – and about 100 employees, the history of the company can be divided between the time before and after the adoption of the Pocket PC on the .NET platform.

Since the company's business is always directly connected to the good performance of the sales force, Battistella tried to modernize its processes in terms of flexibility and agility. At the beginning of 2002, during the annual convention of the company's sales representatives, the possibility was discussed of using a solution that would make customer information available more rapidly, as well as services and connected systems for their respective supervisors, network of representatives and consortium partners.

The solution

The project was implemented as the need arose. With the help of KCL Consultoria, the Battistella Consortium decided to develop a system for the Pocket PC in the .NET environment for its representatives.

In contrast to the initial idea – the object of which was to acquire notebooks for ten supervisors who work directly with 105 representatives scattered across the South and Southeast regions of Brazil – the support of the partner KCL Consultoria caused Battistella to change its mind.

Company

One of the 13 companies of the Battistella Conglomerate, Battistella Administradora de Consórcios markets automobiles and buildings and has about 100 employees.

Situation

The Battistella Consortium wanted to create a solution that would make information on clients, services and connected systems of the company available more rapidly to its respective supervisors, network of representatives and consortium partners.

Solution

The consortium created a Pocket PC system for its representatives, developed in Visual Basic .NET.

Tools

Microsoft Office
Microsoft Windows 2000 Server
Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS)
Microsoft SQL Server

Challenges

Adoption of mobile communication brought many advantages to Battistella. The system, among other functions, offers access to meeting results, and bids from customers which have assured an increase of 20% in productivity.

In contact with Microsoft's .NET technology, the company designed a pilot project using the Pocket PC in which a program developed with Microsoft Visual Basic .NET was installed.

Through another partnership with HP/Compaq, Battistella bought ten iPAQ Pocket PC 3760 models for their supervisors, who have been working with the equipment since July 2002. The expectation is to extend the benefit to the authorized representatives, offering a credit line to finance the purchase of pocket computers and computerize the network itself.

Battistella is still developing a project for its area of competence, following in the very successful footsteps of using Pocket PC's on .NET for the sales supervisors. The solution provides for the inclusion of photos of buildings appraised, land, property seized, among others, that will reduce the travel time of the attorneys to Court, in addition to lowering the expense of copies to monitor proceedings.

The benefits

The adoption of mobile communications bore fruit for Battistella. In a short time, the benefits were already apparent. The system offers access to the results of meetings – where automobiles and buildings are auctioned; to the customers' bids – to confer on amounts due and payments; among other facilities, which will result in an increase of 20% in the productivity of the professionals.

The system also makes it possible to upgrade the service record of the Department for Service to the Consortium (SAC), keeping the supervisors and representatives up to date on the service provided to the customer. The information is loaded into the handheld computer at any time, via Internet, always with security protocols.

The advantages in communication have also already appeared in spite of the short time in use. At first, approximately R\$ 20,000 was spent on the purchase of the machines, in addition to R\$ 10,000 for training and consulting. If the option of notebooks had been purchased, Battistella calculates that this expense would have been more than triple, reaching around R\$ 70,000 in equipment alone.

If they were using notebooks, the supervisors and representatives would have dealt with some disadvantages, such as the inconvenience of the size of the equipment and greater risk of theft, in addition to the additional costs for software licenses. "For the administrator, the pocket equipment represents not only a better cost/benefit ratio, but the ability to offer the professionals quick access to electronic mail messages, in addition to greater ease in consulting the database," explains Ricardo Cortesi, the person responsible for the IT area of the Battistella Consortium. "The system was developed using only information relevant to the better performance of the activities of our supervisors and representatives."

The differences offered by the Microsoft environment include the possibility of remote applications communicating over the Internet using XML technology and greater security in the transfer of customer data. In addition to economizing in the purchase of the equipment, the Battistella Consortium also gained the ease of learning and use of the application.

Battistella's technological change also included a new solution for the transmission of the meetings of the consortium. Until January 2002, Battistella used a closed circuit TV channel to transmit the meetings to about 100 representatives. The company had an uplink and transmitted the meetings via satellite at an average cost of R\$ 40,000 per meeting for those held live in São Paulo and practically twice that for any other location.

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Battistella changed its strategy and, monitoring the trends, now transmits the auctions live via the Internet. Cláudio Luiz dos Santos, the person responsible for the department of new projects and processes, says that his greatest worry was the quality of the image and the delay between the transmission and the display of the video/sound of the results of the auction. "Six months of evaluations and studies, in partnership with KCL Consultoria, made the solution viable," he says.

For this, the company used a Pentium III Dual, with 1 GHz of RAM [sic], running Windows 2000 Professional with an image capture board and a Windows Media Player encoder, which are responsible for transmitting the image from a studio at the administrative headquarters in São Paulo. To send the package of image and sound to the supplier, a connection to the Internet, with a speed of at least 128 kB, is needed. There, another server works with Windows 2000 Server and Windows Media Service, assuming responsibility for the distribution of images and sound to the network (Internet).

Result: the transmission cost for each meeting dropped 87.5% to the current R\$5,000. In addition to spending less, the company assures greater convenience for the consortium members, who can monitor the auction and make bids from any place in the world and even participate in a live chat with Battistella, asking questions and giving opinions.

More information

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