



BlackBerry Customer Success Story



Parks Department Improves Productivity and Inspection Processes with Help from BlackBerry Smartphone

THE CHALLENGE

The City of Prince George's Parks Department evaluates and reports on the condition of up to 40 of its 150 parks every day. During the warmer months, two-person crews inspect playground equipment at every site, including each swing set, teeter-totter and slide to ensure that they are safe. In the winter, inspectors ensure city parking lots, pathways to civic buildings and stairs have been salted, sanded and plowed. In the past, the inspectors' reports were hand-written and then manually entered into a spreadsheet at the office. Administrative staff were spending more than two hours per day entering the data into a computer and producing a report for city management.

"Our process was cumbersome and it took up a lot of extra time," said Kurt Birkmann, Project Manager for the City of Prince George. "Sometimes our clerical staff wouldn't have time to input the reports that day and we would end up four or five days behind." The pen and paper approach was problematic because papers would get lost and office staff did not have enough information about what the crew had accomplished until they returned to the office in the afternoon.

The city is responsible for the safety of public parks in the summer and roads in the winter; meaning that the city is liable should something go wrong. "If someone hurts themselves on the playground and we can't prove we were out there to check it, then we could be liable for that," said Birkmann. "We needed a way to demonstrate that we were doing our due diligence and that we were doing our best to ensure our parks and roads were safe."

THE SOLUTION

"A light bulb went off when I saw CityReporter demonstrated at a technology fair," said Birkmann. ParkReporter, a module of CityReporter, is an application created for businesses and municipalities with field service and mobile employees. Soon after seeing the application in action, the City of Prince George partnered with Noratek Solutions Inc., the developer of ParkReporter, to deploy the solution using BlackBerry® smartphones.

The City of Prince George worked with Noratek Solutions Inc. to create several digital forms that matched the paper versions inspectors were already using on their clipboards. Each crew was given one BlackBerry smartphone with the ParkReporter application installed for the duration of their shift. Using the application and their BlackBerry smartphone, technicians check off inspected items while at the park.

The City of Prince George is located in northern British Columbia (BC), a province on the west coast of Canada. With a population of approximately 75,000, Prince George is the largest city in BC's north and is known as the province's northern capital. Prince George has about 750 municipal employees, and its Parks Department oversees and maintains over 20 soccer fields, seven ice rinks, two aquatic facilities and 150 parks within the city limits.

Industry: Municipal Government

Region: North America

Company Size:
Large Organization - 500+ employees

Email Platform:
Microsoft® Exchange

Solution:

- ParkReporter by Noratek Solutions Inc.
- BlackBerry® Enterprise Server

“Since we implemented our BlackBerry solution, we have increased productivity, improved customer service and insulated ourselves from legal claims.”

Kurt Birkmann
Project Manager
City of Prince George

Once each crew is finished at a particular location, the inspection form gets synchronized with a hosted database and is accessible to Prince George’s Parks Department through a web site with a secure login. Foremen and administrative staff access the web site during the day to monitor productivity and any potential problems warranting further attention. Crews can also add comments to an inspection entry to notify office staff if there is a problem at one of the parks or on a roadway.

Leveraging the GPS functionality on the BlackBerry smartphone, the ParkReporter application is also designed to access and track the time, date and location of each inspection so that office staff can monitor the progress of each crew. As the day progresses, staff can check the website to confirm where an inspector was standing when each report was submitted. This information can also be used later to demonstrate when and where a city employee inspected a playground or road.

CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE’S BENEFITS

“With the old system, there was always the possibility you’d lose a piece of paper,” said Birkmann. “Our BlackBerry solution is just as easy as a pen and paper, only now each file is tagged, time-stamped and in the system for everybody to see.” Since the City of Prince George introduced their BlackBerry solution, back-end data entry has been essentially eliminated. Birkmann said the new system has increased productivity by as much as two hours per day for each administrative staff member. More importantly, reporting is virtually real-time. The city no longer has a lag time of hours or days, meaning that supervisors are better able to keep apprised of the current status of each project.

On the customer service side, when citizens call with a question or complaint, staff can log into the system and provide an up-to-date answer about whether or not a crew has been to a certain site. “We have seen a huge difference in our ability to respond to the public,” said Birkmann. “In the past, when someone called up, it could take hours or maybe two to three days to get back to them. Now, with the almost real-time reporting of our BlackBerry solution, we can answer their questions during that very first point of contact.”

Inspectors also have the ability to document their efforts which is helpful to limit the city’s liability in the event of a legal claim. The time, date and location stamp shows where and when an inspection was completed. “Even though something might have happened to a piece of equipment after an inspection, we now have the ability to demonstrate our due diligence,” said Birkmann. “Since we implemented our BlackBerry solution, we haven’t had one legal concern raised against our department.”

KEY BENEFITS

- Increased productivity and efficiency
 - Better way to document due diligence
 - Provides better customer service
 - Allows staff to pinpoint crew locations
-

www.blackberry.com/go/success



Results specific to The City of Prince George Parks Department and may not be typical. This material, including all material incorporated by reference herein or made available by hyperlink, is provided or made accessible “AS IS” and “AS AVAILABLE” and without condition, endorsement, guarantee, representation or warranty of any kind by Research In Motion Limited and its affiliated companies (“RIM”) and RIM assumes no responsibility for any typographical, technical, or other inaccuracies, errors or omissions in this material and shall not be liable for any type of damages related to this material or its use, or performance, or non-performance of any software, hardware, service, or any references to third-party sources of information, hardware or software, products or services including components and content such as content protected by copyright and/or third-party web sites (collectively the “Third Party Products and Services”). When you subscribe to Third Party Products and Services you accept that: 1. It is your sole responsibility to: (a) ensure that your airtime service provider will support all features; (b) identify and acquire all required intellectual property licences prior to installation or use and to comply with the terms of such licences; 2. RIM makes no representation, warranty or guarantee and assumes no liability whatsoever in relation to Third Party Products or Services. The limitations and exclusions herein shall apply irrespective of the nature of the cause of action and in no event shall any director, employee, agent, distributor, supplier or independent contractor of RIM have any liability related to the material. © 2011 Research In Motion Limited. All rights reserved. BlackBerry®, RIM®, Research In Motion® and related trademarks, names and logos are the property of Research In Motion Limited and are registered and/or used in the U.S. and countries around the world. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. MKT #: 40802-001