



BlackBerry Customer Success Story

NOVA SCOTIA **POWER** An Emera Company

Nova Scotia Power Inc. (NSPI) is an electrical distribution utility that manages \$3.5 billion CAD of generation, transmission and distribution assets across the province of Nova Scotia in Canada. The 30,000 km (18,600 mile) electrical system provides electricity to nearly 500,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers. NSPI employs more than 1,800 employees and strives to be a reliable utility with a clear focus on customer service.

Industry: Distribution/Transportation

Region: North America

Company Size:
Large Enterprise - more than 1,800 employees

Email Platform:
Microsoft® Exchange

Solution:

- Freeance™ Mobile App
- BlackBerry® GPS
- OtterBox™ Case

BlackBerry Solution helps Electrical Distribution Utility Boost Productivity of Data Collection Team in the Field

THE CHALLENGE

As part of NSPI's GIS Connectivity Project, field personnel travel on foot and by vehicle gathering data about asset locations and customer connectivity across the entire electrical distribution infrastructure. However, the mobile devices that NSPI was using could not scale to meet the requirements of the company's new, more extensive field operation - where work had to be completed within a tight timeline.

"We had used ruggedized mobile devices designed specifically for field use for some of our previous data collection work, but we experienced major productivity limitations," says Brian Shannon, Connectivity Project Manager at NSPI. "The devices required field workers to travel to local NSPI offices scattered throughout the province at the end of each work day and upload collected data via direct connection to workstations."

Shannon and his team needed a secure mobile GIS solution that offered remote data transfer directly to its ARC® GIS server software - without requiring additional travel and manual syncing between devices and servers. Any device or applications chosen for the project also had to be easy to navigate and stand up to the rigors of everyday use in the field.

THE SOLUTION

Shannon's team determined that the BlackBerry® Enterprise Server, the built-in GPS capability of BlackBerry® smartphones and Freeance™ Mobile, an application for GIS mobility, were the right combination of technologies for their needs. The Freeance Mobile - Pro Edition application was used to build customized data collection forms, configured with required fields and predefined values. The application helps to maximize ease-of-use and minimize the chances of error.

Using BlackBerry smartphones, NSPI's field personnel can simply fill out the forms using drop down menus to record field assets and connectivity details. The GPS feature of the BlackBerry smartphone records the location of each entry automatically. The record is then saved to the NSPI server.

The customized nature of the forms and the easy-to-navigate characteristics of the BlackBerry smartphone were integral to the solution. "In field data collection situations, there can be inaccuracies, but this solution helps to make the data collection clean and straightforward, resulting in fewer human errors. It also helps that the GPS component makes the location data more accurate," says Shannon.

“Freeance Mobile and the BlackBerry solution allowed us to avoid the need for collectors to travel to local utility depots for data uploads each day. Two hours saved per day for each of the 14 collectors, translates into nearly \$200,000 worth of labor savings.”

Brian Shannon
GIS Connectivity Project Manager
Nova Scotia Power Inc.

KEY BENEFITS

- More accurate data with GPS functionality
 - Easier to dispatch crews to storm-affected areas
 - Less travel and administrative effort
 - Durability in the field
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The BlackBerry solution also met NSPI security requirements for the way private customer connectivity data is collected and transmitted. “The built in security of the BlackBerry solution helps provide the protection we need for the customer data,” says Shannon. “In our experience, BlackBerry smartphones combined with OtterBox™ cases are very suitable for field use in rugged conditions. They stand up fine and we don’t have issues in terms of durability.”

NOVA SCOTIA POWER’S BENEFITS

The linchpin of the GIS Connectivity Project is the ability of the BlackBerry solution to provide reliable connectivity in the field for almost immediate GIS server updates. “Freeance Mobile and the BlackBerry solution allows us to avoid the need for collectors to travel to local utility depots for data uploads each day,” says Shannon. “Two hours saved per day for each of the 14 collectors, translates into nearly \$200,000 worth of labor savings.” NSPI also found that having the collected data transmitted directly to the GIS server upon collection helps reduce errors and contributes to faster turnaround times between data collection and submission to the GIS Technicians for processing.

“The BlackBerry solution and Freeance Mobile provided an integrated approach for our utility to improve speed and accuracy throughout our processes, including data collection in the field, updating the GIS system and approving system changes,” says Richard Janega, Executive Vice President and COO. “In addition to the time and costs savings we’ve already enjoyed, we also attain more accurate data for our electric distribution system model going forward.”

In addition to these operational and financial benefits, the ultimate payoff for NSPI has been increased ability to deliver exceptional customer service. Accurate data in the electrical system model helps NSPI predict outage locations more precisely and dispatch restoration crews more effectively. For NSPI, this benefit is particularly evident in large storms where more than 50 crews can be dispatched; having crews staged correctly maximizes their performance, minimizes logistical effort and speeds resolutions.

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