

THE CARPHONE WAREHOUSE SELECTS CENTRASTAGE FOR REMOTE DEVICE MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Carphone Warehouse (Carphone) is the largest independent mobile phone retailer in the world. The company has over 820 stores throughout the UK and has more than 7,000 in store laptops for customers to use. In the UK alone, it welcomes over 1.6 million customers through its doors every week.

The company works hard to protect its brand and vision and ensure it is communicated consistently across the store network. In-store IT is increasingly becoming part of the customer experience and the company needed to ensure the IT infrastructure added to the high-quality reputation of the business.

BACKGROUND

In November 2007 Carphone had over 900 laptops in stores throughout the UK. Initially the laptops were sent out unlocked, meaning that brand continuity and standard configuration was hard to maintain as staff in each retail unit would customise their in store laptop with personalised screen savers, desktop backgrounds, sounds and images, any continuity was lost as a result.

In-store laptops were an important source of product information and advice to customers and Dave Newman, Channel Platform Manager, wanted to portray a consistent brand image to all customers as well as managing IT assets efficiently. Carphone looked for a solution that could:

- Bring continuity and protection to The Carphone Warehouse brand throughout each store
- Co-ordinate and manage all in-store digital signage from a single location
- Centrally control and manage the in-store IT infrastructure

CHALLENGES

With hundreds of in-store laptops, each one personalised, Carphone knew that regaining control and managing the system centrally was crucial in order to bring continuity to the brand. "The demonstration laptops we had in store were unmanageable without a visit to each site or returning the device to the warehouse, a process that took several days and numerous hours to organise. It was a huge overhead."

In addition to the time spent visiting stores, configuring laptops and the cost of returning faulty equipment, The Carphone Warehouse had no way of checking each laptop remained online and was being used correctly by staff and customers.

Ongoing maintenance was also a problem for Dave Newman's team. "We regularly update our IT systems for staff and customers. This was a very time consuming process as adding and updating software had to be physically carried out at each store."

Finally, with over 135,000 inches of potential advertising space, Dave's team wanted the ability to manage the company's digital signage from a single location. With hundreds of laptops on display to customers, screen savers promoting the latest products and services were seen as a potentially valuable communication platform to customers.

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SOLUTIONS

In November 2007, Carphone approached CentraStage, a specialist remote device management solution. CentraStage is a web-based platform designed to improve the management of distributed servers, PCs and laptops. Functionality includes audit, monitoring, remote support, deployment and reporting capabilities.

Ian van Reenen, Chief Technical Officer for CentraStage explains, "Although there are other device management solutions on the market, none of them could do exactly what The Carphone Warehouse wanted. CentraStage has been specifically designed for an unstructured network – a corporate solution for a non corporate environment. CentraStage is designed based on our research and development with customers – sitting with them, understanding their real requirements and making sure the software does exactly what they want."

The CentraStage solution also means that in-store devices can continuously monitor WiFi networks across the stores, ensuring devices are online and available, and can monitor device usage and activity. Laptops can be remotely managed, with new software and device content deployed automatically across thousands of devices. When the company releases new interactive content, such as screensavers to accompany a product launch, it can be deployed to all machines instantly.

RESULTS

In the past two-and-a-half-years CentraStage has had a significant effect on The Carphone Warehouse business, as Dave Newman explains, "CentraStage has revolutionised not only how we manage and control the in-store laptops, but it has completely changed the way we utilise these key assets. CentraStage is now a critical marketing tool for The Carphone Warehouse, and the technology underpins the in-store demo laptops as a revenue stream by allowing us to deliver centrally managed advertising content across all demonstration devices in-store. This equates to 135,000 inches of interactive billboard space nationally. There is a huge amount of value in what the CentraStage technology offers Carphone Warehouse; not only have the demo laptops become a profit centre for the company, but CentraStage has delivered huge efficiency savings to the business. In addition my team is now able to offer a similar demo laptop support service to The Phonehouse stores across Europe and the newly opened stores for Best Buy".

As well as centrally managing all remote IT devices, administering software updates centrally and fixing any software issues remotely, saving valuable time and budget, the technology forms part of the store experience, delivering targeted information and marketing messages to customers.

A further benefit of CentraStage technology has been the ability to deliver in-store e-learning and improve internal communication between head office and the stores. Dave Newman elaborates, "Each month the CEO sends out a video message to all staff with company data, management information and corporate updates. This used to be done via email and it was hard to tell if these were read or understood. CentraStage ensures communication is received and watched by each store. We have also delivered numerous training modules through CentraStage, using interactive technology to continue to up-skill in-store teams – the technology provides a quick and efficient way of bringing all stores across the country up to date."

Dave Newman concludes, "CentraStage has added significant revenue to our business. The technology has paid for itself twice over within the first two years and is seen as a profit generator, rather than a cost, internally. We now have complete control over The Carphone Warehouse brand throughout the IT devices in each UK store, and increasingly throughout Europe; we can manage all digital signage centrally and have saved thousands of man hours visiting and updating in-store equipment. It has proved so compelling that CentraStage is now being rolled out to the new Best Buy stores opening in the UK this year, which is testament to the power of the software and the proposition it enables us to deliver. We couldn't be happier."

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ABOUT CENTRASTAGE

CentraStage is an Information Technology (IT) support platform with a difference – affordable, advanced remote computer management. A web-based device management platform designed to improve the management of servers, PCs and laptops, CentraStage can save IT support organisations both time and money. From individual users to sophisticated IT managed service providers, CentraStage is designed to run on any device, PC, server and laptop. Functionality includes audit, monitoring, remote support, deployment and reporting.

For further information, please contact www.centrastage.com or info@centrastage.com