



Bullwell Trailer Solutions Ltd



Introduce new PDA Technology

by Richard Eaton

Go on, admit it...

There have been times when you forgot to reply to that important email or text message, so you claim it never arrived or that you did respond and that it must have been lost somehow. We've probably all done it at some time but it's not an excuse you'll ever hear at Bullwell Trailer Solutions where their team of service engineers are now using a new system tailor made to improve communications and reduce paperwork.



The PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) looks like a mobile phone and can be used to make calls as normal but also functions as a message manager allowing instant communications between engineers and their control centre.

Messages cannot be deleted until read and the sender is notified of the time when the message was viewed, cutting out any issues as to whether the call was acted upon.

Head Office can now send messages to all it's staff in an instant saving both time and costly telephone calls.

The primary function of the PDA however is to allow the team of over 50 engineers to create electronic service records at any time without

the need to contact their control room.

As soon as an engineer arrives on site to service a trailer, he selects and inputs basic information

using a stylus on the PDA's screen to record details such as time, location, the trailer chassis and fleet number and the work to be done from a preset list of options.

This information is instantly sent to the office database which checks and validates the information before generating a return call to allocate the work and provide a full report of the trailer's service history together with any notes relevant to the customer. Within just a few minutes, the engineer has both the information and authorisation he needs to begin the service, and head office are instantly informed that the work is in progress.



Gary Bulley, Managing Director
Bullwell Trailer Solutions Ltd

The engineer then enters the type of trailer service required and the PDA generates a form detailing how long the work will take and a menu where he can simply enter the part numbers used for the job.

All new or replacement parts including their positions on the trailer are recorded together with details of why they were fitted.

Using product codes alone, the PDA calculates all the costs and generates an invoice without the engineer having to carry numerous catalogues and worry about labour rates, parts discounts and VAT. The PDA also produces VOSA compliant service sheets into which the engineer can simply input details of faults and actions using the menu driven interface.

Once finished, both the customer and the engineer sign the screen to close the call down and verify that either the service was completed or that further work is required.

Finally, Head Office receives this information to generate a pro-forma invoice using the customers own standard times and parts price list. Before the engineer has even left the site, the customer is sent a service sheet detailing all the work carried out.

Gary Bulley, Managing Director explains, "Using the latest PDA technology, our engineers are now able to electronically file job cards, breakdown details and service sheets with our control room, which can track the progress of all our engineers in real time. The system automatically confirms when mail has been opened, read and responded to."

Ian Ashman, Service Fleet Manager says, "We have now removed all the old problems associated with telephone calls and faxes saving us both time and money. Our engineers can now create their own calls and job cards even when the office is closed, furthermore, they are visible and can be tracked at all times. The staff have taken to the new system well with no complaints of 'big brother' watching over them. The PDA allows communication to work both ways as engineers know that Head Office are dealing with any issues they may have filed."

Bullwell Trailer Solutions are the UK's largest on-site trailer specialist with over 50 mobile vans offering trailer maintenance and repairs from Newcastle in the north to Portsmouth in the south.

The technicians use fully equipped vehicles to ensure that trailer fleets are kept on the road with access to parts, tools, welding facilities and of course the new PDA technology to ensure rapid diagnosis and repair for an impressive list of Blue Chip companies.

Gary Bulley, Managing Director continues, "Our Long-Term Fixed Price Maintenance Contracts now account for 40% of our business and is an area which continues to grow.



The interior of a fully equipped service vehicle

Using a complex model which we have developed over the last 20 years, we are now amazingly accurate in predicting the future repair and service costs of these long-term contracts.

We are always pro-active with our contract customers and hold monthly meetings where we present a full breakdown of their spend for any part of their trailers and use this information to identify areas of excessive cost.

For one customer alone, we were able to save £2000 per week using the PDA data received from our engineers.

"We are proud to say that our MOT pass rate is now well over the national average which reduces both trailer downtime and costs. This shows that our analysis and quality control are second to none and it remains an important benchmark for the future."

Customer complaints at Bullwell Trailer Solutions are almost none existent, but they still insist on running random checks to make sure that problems are kept to a minimum. Using an independent Quality Control Manager, regular checks are made on their technicians to ensure that they are working within strict service codes and health and safety policies.

The new PDA system and the data it receives are now one of the company's biggest sales tools and together with their wealth of engineering skills, there aren't many problems that Bullwell Trailer Solutions can't solve.

From their workshops in Tamworth, Swindon and now Kidderminster, the company continues to take on new staff, and with plans to expand operations to include a new base in Lichfield, the forecast for the company looks bright.



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