



Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Professional Services

Customer Profile

Kenyon International Emergency Services is based in Houston, Texas, and provides emergency response and fatality management services around the world.

Business Situation

Kenyon wanted to take advantage of mobile technology to streamline the process of identifying, cataloging, and managing personal effects from disaster sites.

Solution

Kenyon worked with Microsoft® partner Catapult Systems to deploy a solution based on Windows Mobile™ 2003 software for Pocket PCs using ruggedized Pocket PC devices running inventory software.

Benefits

- Information from disaster sites collated using unique IDs.
- Electronic catalog speeds process of returning items quickly to families.
- Kenyon employees spend less time on paperwork.

Disaster Response Company Uses Mobile Solution to Expedite Inventory Processes

“This system will make us one of a kind in the world.”

Jerry Novosad, Vice President of Operations, Kenyon International

Kenyon International Emergency Services is a Texas-based company that provides emergency response services to government agencies and private companies worldwide. To help its field teams collect and catalog personal effects gathered at disaster sites, Kenyon worked with Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner Catapult Systems to deploy a solution based on Windows Mobile™ 2003 software for Pocket PCs using Pocket PC devices and Microsoft server products on the back end. The result is faster, more streamlined collection and cataloging of items to be sent to victims' family members and investigators—meaning better service in the aftermath of traumatic events.



“We recognize the value of technology to process information. And we recognize that there are technology strategists who could take our dilemma and solve it for us. That’s been the result of working with Catapult on the Windows Mobile solution.”

Lowell Briggs
Director of International Marketing
Kenyon International

Situation

Kenyon International Emergency Services is a global company specializing in emergency response and fatality management. Kenyon works with government agencies; air, sea and rail carriers; insurance companies; and other industry groups in response to manmade and natural disasters such as airline crashes or hurricanes. Kenyon, which is headquartered in Houston, Texas, maintains Disaster Response Teams (DRTs) around the world to perform a variety of critical services in the hours immediately following a disaster, such as recovery, identification, and disposition of human remains and personal effects; coordinating crisis intervention and other types of support centers; and providing mental health services such as bereavement counseling. Kenyon also provides pre-incident planning and training services. Events that Kenyon has participated in range from office fires to airline crashes around the world to helping New York City agencies in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center.

One of Kenyon’s most visible and labor-intensive services involves sending teams to recover, identify, preserve, and make final arrangements for bodily remains and personal effects in the hours following a disaster. This is critical not only for investigators who are trying to determine the cause and consequences of a disaster, but also to help family and friends cope with the psychological trauma caused by the loss of a loved one.

Historically, Kenyon’s DRTs used a paper-based process to take inventories and otherwise document items found at disaster sites. However, this paper-based method was resource-intensive for the organization, left the process open to mistakes due to misfiled or lost paper, and in general slowed the closure of the recovery process for families and friends of survivors. For example,

locating a stored item designated for return to a family could entail searching through hand-written pages of documentation, then conducting a physical search of boxes or storage shelves where the item might be located.

To continue providing the best service possible for its global customers, Kenyon management decided to investigate possible IT solutions that could help with the field-based data collection process.

Solution

Kenyon decided to work with Catapult Systems, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner that specializes in providing e-business solutions, custom application development, and software integration. Catapult worked with Kenyon to design a solution based on Microsoft® Windows Mobile™ 2003 software for Pocket PCs that includes an inventory application running on ruggedized Symbol PDT 8100 Series Pocket PC devices, which come with built-in keyboards and a large-screen display. The devices use Symbol’s bar-coding hardware and application interface, which are used to scan bar-code labels in order to identify and track items found at disaster sites.

The solution—called the Personal Effects Information System, or PEIS—assists the DRTs in providing inventory and documentation details on personal effects recovered at a disaster site. The Windows Mobile 2003 component was created using the Microsoft .NET Compact Framework and SQL Server™ 2000 Windows® CE Edition 2.0, a compact database that is used on the Symbol devices to provide a small but powerful relational database to store information about personal effects gathered from a disaster site. Information on the Symbol Pocket PCs is synchronized either by a WiFi connection or by using ActiveSync® 3.7 technology, depending on site logistics.

In addition to Pocket PC devices, the PEIS system includes extensive use of Microsoft Windows-based products and technologies on Kenyon's back-end systems. This includes Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003 operating system and the SQL Server 2000 database—both part of Windows Server System™ integrated server software—and the Internet Information Services 6.0 (IIS) Web server. Kenyon uses SQL Server 2000 Reporting Services, a comprehensive, server-based solution that enables the creation, management, and delivery of both paper-based and electronic reports, including reports that can be uploaded to a Web site or merged into Microsoft Office System-based documents.

Benefits

The new solution is helping make Kenyon's disaster response tasks faster and more efficient. It provides a centralized means of gathering and storing information on the effects recovered from disaster sites, and gives the organization a more streamlined method of finding specific items in storage.

"Catapult has taken a completely unfamiliar process and applied tools and technologies to help us," says Jerry Novosad, Vice President of Operations for Kenyon. "This system will make us one of a kind in the world."

Electronic Catalogs of Items Help Streamline Processes

Lowell Briggs, Kenyon's Director of International Marketing, says benefits of the new solution begin when DRT workers turn on their devices at disaster sites. The application on the Pocket PCs provides an intuitive means of entering information about effects found at a site. This information is augmented by digital photographs that are linked to items in the database.

"This allows Kenyon to sort and create catalogs electronically," Briggs says. "Catalogs can then be generated based on the next-of-kin's instructions. Contact information is stored in the SQL Server database and a separate correspondence system. The PEIS system includes several specific views that are used to synchronize the data between the two systems so letters can be sent using Mail Merge from Microsoft Office 2003."

Solution Reduces Time and Labor

This data linkage streamlines the time and labor it requires to compile and produce reports. It also is a key component of the "Anytime Inventory" system that Catapult helped to implement. Using this system, Kenyon staff, whether at headquarters or in remote offices, can log on to the system using passwords and find out about the disposition status and location of an item almost instantly.

"Moreover, we were able to implement a uniform method of describing items and creating clarity on labels, which helps minimize any confusion that could be caused by language or cultural traditions," Briggs says.

Centralized System Helps Families

Although the new solution helps Kenyon operate more efficiently, the most important aspect of the system is that it helps the organization serve the families of victims more effectively.

"For example, if you consider the crash and disintegration of a commercial airliner, there is a tremendous amount of personal effects strewn everywhere," Briggs says. "It's a complex job to gather and catalog everything in this kind of situation. But it has to be done as best as possible, because the retrieval of specific personal items is an integral part of the recovery efforts for survivors and families

For More Information

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For more information about Catapult Systems products and services, call (512) 328-8181 or visit the Web site at: www.catapultsystems.com

For more information about Kenyon International Emergency Services products and services, call (281) 872-6074 or visit the Web site at: www.kenyoninternational.com

of victims. Effective retrieval can mean the difference between a smooth recovery or extended pain and suffering that will only be mitigated to some degree if and when a personal effect is returned. People can deal with loss more effectively if a personal effect is present.

“Under our old system, there was just so much information and material, and we really needed a way to process, identify, and return personal effects to families in a more timely fashion. We recognize the value of technology to process information. We also recognize there are technology strategists who can take our dilemma and resolve it for us. This conclusion is the result of working with Catapult on the Windows Mobile solution.”

Microsoft Windows Mobile

Windows Mobile software extends the familiar Windows experience to mobile devices, helping to maximize your time, enjoy free moments, and stay in touch with both what and who matters to you.

For more information about Windows Mobile, go to: www.microsoft.com/windowsmobile

Software and Services

- Products
 - Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Windows CE 2.0
- Technologies
 - Microsoft .NET Compact Framework
 - Microsoft Pocket PC

Hardware

- Symbol PDT 8100 Pocket PC

Partners

- Catapult Systems