

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

ACSONE ENABLES FASTER, MORE RELIABLE READINGS OF GAS AND ENERGY METERS



Our tour planners and field agents are able to function much more autonomously, yet efficiently with this new web-based solution from Acson. We are much more flexible in our daily operations and accurate in our meter recordings.

Guillaume Zuyderhoff, Head Of Software Factory
at Sibelga

→ THE SITUATION: GAS AND ELECTRICITY MARKET LIBERATION REQUIRES ACCURACY AND BETTER RESPONSE TIME FOR THE METERS READINGS

Metrix is a subsidiary of Sibelga, the distribution network operator for electricity and natural gas in the Brussels-Capital Region. With a lean staff of only 50 people, Metrix is responsible for reading and recording the energy meters throughout the region, which equates to nearly 2 million meter-readings annually. This data is then transmitted to Sibelga and subsequently submitted to the various energy suppliers to use as the basis for customer billing. Flexibility, reliability and accuracy are all imperative to the process.

→ THE CHALLENGE: METER READING REQUIREMENTS OUTGROW OLD SYSTEM

Metrix must schedule meter-reading tours meticulously to ensure that each one is read at least once a year and as frequently as monthly for its major customers. In addition, daily “on demand” reading tours are also created by various special events, such as provider switches or customer or supplier inquiries.

With the previous system, agents were relying on individual PDA’s and a simple, obsolete server application, making production deadlines and quality criteria increasingly more difficult to meet. Metrix needed to increase visibility and transparency in the process by creating a better planning tool; one that leveraged a more modern PDA application to optimize the efforts of each individual agent.

→ OUR SOLUTION: AN AGILE, WEB-BASED METER READING AND RECORDING SYSTEM

Acson developed a central application using modern Java-based web technology and a graphical mobile application that provides a synthetic view of the tours. The new web-based solution covers all the existing features and introduces new capabilities for Metrix agents and planners. Planners now have views that help them control the evolution of a tour and manage the lifecycle of each measurement, allowing them to better organize, assign and transfer tours to agents PDAs. Agents, in turn, can download tours automatically on their PDAs using LAN or GPRS network. They can drill-down their view of the tours and can encode meters in a more

efficient manner; ensuring only consolidated and validated results are transmitted to Sibelga, and then forwarded to the energy suppliers.

→ OUR RESULTS: ACCURATE, REAL TIME MEASUREMENTS AND INCREASED STAFF EFFICIENCY

The new application has provided impressive enhancements to the overall productivity and autonomy of field agents and planners. A background process sends regular results to the central application and automatically retrieves new, updated tours from the server. The reorganization of the planning activities has enabled staff members to take full advantage of the new application and provide the required quality standards within the necessary timeframes.

Benefits include:

- Increased control, traceability, and execution of tours and actions
- Better visibility on the evolution of measurements with the near real-time background communication between PDA and server through GPRS
- Enabling the agents to work 100% of their time on the field, without the need to synchronize PDA's at Sibelga premises
- Earlier detection of reading errors, enabling second reading by the agent in a more timely fashion
- Flexible and easily maintainable system can be integrated for other mobile purposes

→ TECHNOLOGIES USED

For the server-side, used by the planners, the core application relies on a modern Java J2EE web-based application. Data is collected thanks to a synchronization process with SAP-ISU and stored within a Microsoft SQL-Server database during the process. "On-demand tours" planning is achieved with the help of a simple yet efficient integration with Microsoft MapPoint enabling the planner to visualize the tours on a map and optimize them.

The mobile application has been developed using Microsoft .NET Mobile (C#) and synchronizes with the server application using standard REST services.

Open sources technologies like Spring, Hibernate, ActiveMQ, JasperReports, Solr guarantee a modular, open and sustainable architecture.

→ PROJECT DETAILS

COUNTRY:	Belgium
PERIOD:	2009-2012
NUMBER OF MANDAYS:	900

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