



## Microsoft Windows Mobile Customer Solution Case Study



### Overview

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Retail

### Customer Profile

Minneapolis, Minnesota-based Best Buy employs 125,000 people and has deployed tens of thousands of computers. Geek Squad employs 11,000 in-store and field-based professionals in the United States and Canada.

### Business Situation

The 2,000 field-based support professionals in Best Buy's Geek Squad relied on outdated processes and technologies for routing and scheduling customer service calls to homes and small businesses.

### Solution

Best Buy executives decided to develop and deploy a future scheduling, routing, and dispatch application, and to deploy the application's Windows Mobile® 5.0-based platform right away.

### Benefits

- Solid platform for the rapid deployment of a line-of-business application
- Easily accessible technical content
- More competitive approach to customer service

## Best Buy Gives Field Technicians a Powerful Solution for Scheduling and Routing

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Rich Christensen, Vice President, Business Information Officer, Best Buy

Best Buy, a leading specialty retailer of consumer electronics, computers, and applications, needed a more efficient approach to scheduling and routing for its “Geek Squad” brand—a team of field-based support professionals who serve customers in their homes and small businesses. IT executives decided to develop and deploy a full-scale scheduling, routing, and dispatch application to more than 2,000 Geek Squad Agents. While the application was under development, Best Buy deployed the mobile platform solution on which the application would ultimately reside to some 2,000 support professionals. Based on Windows Mobile® powered smartphones, it is helping them be more productive and provide better service to customers, thanks to rapid access to schedule and route updates, rich communication and collaboration capabilities, and easy access to Internet-based technical content.



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Bob Anderson, Chief Technologist, Best Buy

### Situation

With more than 950 stores and fiscal year 2006 revenues of U.S.\$30 billion, Minneapolis, Minnesota-based Best Buy is the top specialty retailer of consumer electronics, personal computers, entertainment software, and appliances in the United States and Canada.

Besides offering a generous selection of innovative products, Best Buy also provides a unique support service known as “Geek Squad.” With a team of more than 11,000 specially trained technicians, whom Best Buy calls Agents, Geek Squad solves computer problems for consumers throughout the United States and Canada. Its services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to consumers, irrespective of where they purchased their computer, software, or peripherals. Services include setup, installation, upgrades, removal of spyware and adware, training, and consultation.

In the first full year after its mid-2004 national launch, Geek Squad had served more than 2 million customers. Such growth was a result of the organization’s careful attention to serving its customers as well as a series of imaginative and popular television ads. These ads feature the now-unmistakable “Geekmobile” vehicle and the awkward-but-endearing field Agents, who serve customers at their homes or small businesses.

As is common in the retail industry, however, the rapid growth of the Geek Squad brand also led to challenges in maintaining the top-tier service for which its Agents have become known. Rich Christensen, Vice President, Business Information Officer of Best Buy, says those challenges centered primarily on scheduling and routing.

“For Agents to know where they were slated to visit on any given day, they would have to print and carry along a schedule on their

routes,” Christensen explains. “Any updates or changes to the schedule required a phone call or text message between the Agent and the service center or dispatcher. Communication under these restraints limited the quantity and quality of information that could be shared because the Agents had only standard cell phones with basic Internet connectivity.”

### Solution

In response, Christensen and other IT executives at Best Buy decided to develop a major line-of-business application for optimizing the scheduling, routing, and dispatching of all Geek Squad Agents. Integral to that endeavor was implementing a mobile solution for the application and distributing it to the Agents in a timely manner. The executives figured that, even before rolling out the scheduling, routing, and dispatch (SRD) application, they could use the mobile solution to resolve some scheduling challenges and, at the same time, improve overall collaboration and communication between Agents and in-store managers and staff.

As for the mobile device, after considering a notebook device and handheld products from Palm and from Research in Motion (RIM), the executives selected two leading Windows Mobile® powered smartphones enabled by EV-DO (Evolution-Data Optimized) technology. Those devices were the Sprint PCS Vision Smart Device PPC-6700 and the Verizon Wireless XV6700.

### Extensible Messaging

A key factor in the selection of the 6700 smartphones, says Bob Anderson, Chief Technologist of Best Buy, was the devices’ support for Windows Mobile 5.0 software. “We liked Windows Mobile 5.0 and its integration with Microsoft® server technology because of our extensive installation of such technology, particularly Microsoft Exchange

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Scott Lepsch, Technical Specialist, Best Buy

Server 2003,” he says, noting that Exchange Server was a longtime standard at Best Buy. “For this reason, we valued the native support in Windows Mobile 5.0 for mobile messaging through Exchange Server 2003, as well as its support for emerging Exchange Server capabilities for ‘push e-mail,’ security, and management.”

Anderson and his colleagues also appreciated the scalability advantages of Windows Mobile 5.0. “This was, above all, a platform decision,” he says. “We recognized that by deploying a solution based on Windows Mobile 5.0, we would have a single, extensible platform that we could support and enhance with relative ease.”

Christensen cites the need for an innovative solution as another important factor. “Geek Squad Agents embody the Best Buy brand as experts who connect face-to-face with our customers,” he explains. “We considered it essential for them to have leading-edge technology, such as Windows Mobile 5.0 and EV-DO networking, as part of their customer interaction.”

An additional decisive factor was an established collaboration between Best Buy and Microsoft. “As a Microsoft Enterprise Partner since 1996, we recognized the opportunities in that relationship for knowledge sharing between Geek Squad Agents and Microsoft support and product teams,” Christensen says. “We knew that by basing our mobile solution on Microsoft technology, we would be especially well positioned to help our Agents provide the best possible customer experience.”

### **A Pioneering Solution**

In addition, advantages of the PPC-6700 and XV6700 smartphones were factors in the company’s decision to choose those devices for the hardware side of the solution, Anderson points out. “The 6700 smartphones

provided many of the capabilities of a portable computer, but at a far lower price,” he notes. “Also, the carriers supporting the smartphones agreed to provide us very competitive plans.”

Other PPC-6700 and XV6700 features that influenced the decision were the devices’ support for EV-DO; slider keyboards; and support for the future deployment of Windows Mobile voice command functionality, Global Positioning System (GPS), and other, emerging technologies.

In late 2005, Best Buy developers built and deployed an initial rollout of more than 2,000 Windows Mobile powered smartphones to Geek Squad Agents.

Anderson says that the deployment team partnered with Accenture, the carriers, and Microsoft. “The assistance from Microsoft was especially instrumental in helping us to provide one of the earliest large-scale deployments of a Windows Mobile 5.0–based solution in the world,” he says.

### **Benefits**

With the success of the initial rollout, Best Buy executives are fully satisfied that they have chosen the most favorable platform for ultimately deploying the line-of-business SRD application. Within the first few months of the initial rollout, they reported solid improvements in the efficiency of scheduling and routing the Geek Squad Agents. Executives also saw improvements in the Agents’ ability to access other information vital to providing and maintaining excellent customer service.

### **Providing a Solid Platform for Scheduling and Routing**

As Christensen points out, Best Buy now has a “robust, scalable, and highly functional” mobile platform for its upcoming SRD

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Scott Lesch, Technical Specialist, Best Buy

application—a platform that began providing scheduling and routing benefits right away. “Agents can now access updates to their schedules through their smartphone anywhere, and at any time,” Christensen says. “If they become lost or need additional driving directions in transit, they can access maps and directions instantly on the screen.”

#### **Making Technical Content Always Available**

According to Scott Lepsch, Technical Specialist at Best Buy, another much-appreciated benefit for Geek Squad Agents is the ability to access—via the Internet—technical content that might be essential in solving a customer’s problem. “With the limited Internet capability Agents had before this solution, they were forced to bring along a trunkload of documents and manuals, or to try accessing needed technical content using the customer’s not-necessarily-functioning Internet connection,” he says. “Now, Agents have technical content whenever they need it.”

In addition, an Agent can quickly refresh his or her memory of a customer’s larger situation—not just the problem at hand but also the customer’s service history, length of time using a given technology, and so on. “This helps the Agent speak to that customer’s unique issues and concerns with deeper knowledge of the case,” Lepsch adds. “It also gives Geek Squad and Best Buy an obvious competitive advantage over businesses that do not provide field service personnel with rapid and constant access to comprehensive, real-time customer information.”

Lepsch says that other benefits of the Windows Mobile 5.0–based solution stem from the smartphone’s capability to act as an EV-DO “tether” in locations where Internet access might be interrupted. “This capability enables an Agent to use the phone as a dial-

up device for downloading drivers and other data that could make the difference between solving a customer’s problem then and there and having to schedule a follow-up visit,” he explains.

#### **Delivering on a Commitment**

Christensen reports that Best Buy will soon add the Windows Mobile Voice Command (which is now partially deployed) to the mobile devices of all Geek Squad Agents. The company also will evaluate upcoming versions of Windows Mobile and next-generation Windows Mobile powered devices, with an eye toward revamping the user interface in keeping with Agent feedback on the current solution.

Of interest, too, will be implementing GPS and next-generation EV-DO functionality (with testing to be done by the Agents). For the longer term, executives are considering adding a remote-desktop application to the solution.

As Christensen summarizes, “What we have done so far, and will do with these enhancements, is a great example of using key technologies to help the Geek Squad deliver on its fundamental commitment: to give the customer a superior service experience.”

## For More Information

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For more information about Best Buy products and services, visit the Web site at: [www.bestbuy.com](http://www.bestbuy.com)

For more information about Geek Squad services, visit the Web site at: [www.geeksquad.com](http://www.geeksquad.com)

## Windows Mobile

Windows Mobile brings the power of the Windows® operating system to mobile devices, helping businesses and their mobile employees stay connected while on the go. Windows Mobile runs mobile versions of Microsoft programs, including Microsoft Office Outlook® Mobile; Internet Explorer® Mobile; Pocket MSN®; Windows Media® Player Mobile; and Microsoft Office Word Mobile, PowerPoint® Mobile, and Excel® Mobile. With Windows Mobile, information workers get powerful software combined with the familiarity of Windows. Combined with available service plans and connectivity options, Windows Mobile-based devices, available from 42 device makers and 68 mobile operators in 48 countries, can be used to make calls, send e-mail and instant messages, surf the Web, and access critical business information even when users are away from the office.

More information about Windows Mobile can be found at: [www.microsoft.com/windowsmobile](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsmobile)

### Software and Services

- Windows Mobile 5.0
- Microsoft server product portfolio
  - Microsoft Exchange Server 2003

### Hardware

- Sprint PCS Vision Smart Device PPC-6700
- Verizon Wireless XV6700

### Partner

- Accenture