Portable ERP is a Beautiful Thing!

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 "I just want to cut down on the morning smoking, coffee drinking, and generally wasting precious time every day", that quote was one of the main factors in the **ERP** decision of a successful construction service businessman. He just wanted to be the best in our city and beyond and he knew without a shadow of a doubt that he needed to change the way they were doing business. So he built a custom ERP system that worked for his industry, and then built a portable version of the ERP system and never looked back.

The system that we built had a portable component that is accessed via a **PDA** (Personal Digital Assistant) such as the **Treo** cell phone. As long as the PDA supports a **web browser** you can access your part of the system. After many years of using a fax machine to communicate with contractors, the plug was literally pulled from the fax machine and the company in a single day converted from fax to handheld PDA's. The contractors that install and craft the services and products can now pull out their PDA, check what jobs have been scheduled for the day, look at **floor plans**, contracts, material lists, and instantly communicate with the dispatcher and managers. So no longer do the guys have to come into the office in the morning for their orders, they use the PDA.

Training took a grand total of 5 hours for 40 people, most had never used a computer until the day of the training. You may ask what the **upside** is or what is the incentive for the guys, quite simply they get paid faster, they have less paperwork, and their accounting is taken care of in a professional manner. There are other advantages as well, such as **workflow** improvements because as soon as the installer is completed his work, the finisher is alerted and less time is wasted between stages of the job. To top it all off the quality control inspectors have their checklist on the PDA so they can simply input the inspection directly into the corporate database.

This is a true story and a good story, business has never been smoother and more efficient. These types of solutions are offered by **SAP**, **Oracle**, and **Salesforce.com** to name a few.

Oh, one more thing, recently we posted a Blog entry to the Always On Network and there was a constructive comment from one of the readers, it went like this:

> *"After a week spent with people attempting to push CRM onto handhelds, as suggested above, the unanimous conclusion was that such a concept is not currently feasible.*
>
> *Put down the handheld.*
>
> *Step away from the handheld.*
>
> *Pick up laptop.*
>
> *Open laptop…"*

You know, I can't agree more for the white collar environment. In the white collar environment we see people using PDA's at their desk when they have a great desktop based system or even a laptop. In the trade work environment (blue collar), some of the people don't even own a computer and don't intend to own a computer, but every one of the blue collar folks own a cell phone. It is simply a low cost way to get people using your ERP system, no more need to retype information and use all that paper. It just works!

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