PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Beginning in February 2006 the Downtown Long Beach Associates (DLBA) put technology to work with the use of Personal Data Assistants (PDAs) which were issued to the DLBA's team of Downtown Guides as an enhancement to the Downtown Guide Program. Downtown Guides used these paperless technology tools as a means to efficiently document all of their daily activities, which replaced pen and paper documentation.

Time once spent manually logging urban activity is now better spent helping Downtown Long Beach's guests, employees and businesses within the 120-block district. The system automates much of the process; time, date and location are automatically logged to each entry to ensure accuracy. A series of menu dropdowns present the data in a user-friendly fashion, while handwriting recognition is converted into legible text. PDAs can be downloaded wirelessly throughout the day or at the end of a Downtown Guide's shift. Data is then collected in a holding bin on a secure website for review prior to final posting.

The PDA system is a reliable tool in providing superior data acquisitions and is able to retain valuable information at the point of customer contact. With the implementation of PDA systems, Downtown Guides now have instant, customized and comprehensive business information literally at their fingertips. From directions to dining recommendations, the PDA systems allow interaction with visitors to be recorded in greater detail. Visitors receive accurate information and printed point-to-point walking directions for added convenience. Downtown Guides also are able to capture zip code information, and visitor origin reports are easy to review.

In addition to allowing Downtown Guides to work more effectively, the PDA system improves supervisors' ability to manage staff. Reports can be generated from the secure website's "activity dashboard" with just a touch of a button. Supervisors have the ability to review data and generate reports by timeframe, individual or activity to ensure that Downtown Guides are regularly patrolling and completing their assigned areas. The "Map It" feature further provides the user with a quick visual of where activity is occurring.

FUNDING

The DLBA Clean and Safe Program is funded through a Property Based Improvement District (PBID). Operating on a yearly budget of $1.75 million, in fiscal year 2006/2007 the DLBA allotted $501,335 to the Downtown Guide Program.

The initial investment for the software license and hardware was $11,995 and $6,965, respectively. The initial project expense was funded by one-time carryover reserves, and the ongoing monthly expense of $1,100 is incorporated into the Downtown Guide Program's annual budget.

> ***Hardware consisted of the following items:***
> - 9 Dell Axim X51 PDAs
> - 9 Citizens CMP10 Bluetooth Handheld Printers
> - 9 Bluetooth PDA Adapters
> - 9 Armor Cases
> - Dell Inspirion 6000M Laptop

IMPACT

Putting technology to work has had a positive impact on the DLBA's Downtown Guide Program in the following ways:

> ***Time Savings:***
> - Prior to implementing the PDA system, staff spent several hours tallying daily activities by zone and entry type. On Monday morning the dailies would be tallied to provide the weekly statistics, and staff would process approximately 500 sheets of paper each week. With an easy and convenient wireless connection, the PDA system is synchronized within minutes at the end of each shift; however, there is no need to wait until the end of shift as PDAs can be synchronized at any time during the day. Downtown Guides are able to spend additional time in the field and only need to return to the office 15 minutes prior to the end of their shift instead of the 30 to 45 minutes that were previously required prior to the implementation of the PDA system.

IMPACT (cont.)

Personnel Management:
- PDAs can be synchronized anytime during a Downtown Officer's shift and the use of the "Map It" feature allows an exact account of what areas Downtown Guides have covered, as well as what they have accomplished during their shifts. Such accountability has allowed for easier and more consistent coverage throughout the entire 120-block district.

Real Time Data:
- After synchronizing, reviewing and approving the PDA system information, the logs are available for review as postings occur every 15 minutes.

Data Accuracy:
- Data is reviewed in the pending bin on a secure website. Data can be easily sorted to allow quick review and approval of up to 50 entries at a time. Incident reports that might require closer scrutiny can be sorted, reviewed and edited prior to approval. The spell check feature helps to eliminate any misunderstandings.

Easy Access to Data:
- Reports can be generated with the touch of a button, and it is very simple to review data specific to an address, business name or just a keyword like "gun." Graffiti and illegal dumping reports can be printed and faxed to different city agencies, and the elimination of trying to decipher each Downtown Officers' handwriting, as well as recreating reports, has proven to be a timesaving measure. In addition, utilizing the "Map It" feature provides an accurate overview of where illegal dumping and graffiti are occurring.

Database Management:
- Downtown Guides are able to submit potential business changes, such as ownership, address or telephone number. The information is reviewed and approved prior to allowing the database change. The next time the PDA system is synchronized the information is updated.

Training:
- Eponic, Inc., provider of the PDA system, conducted initial, onsite training for DLBA staff and the Downtown Guides. The PDA Program was embraced by the Downtown Guides and, after initial training and instruction, the Downtown Guides became proficient in using the PDA system. Training is now provided as part of our new employee curriculum.

Marketing & Sponsorship Programs
- Businesses have an option of providing a coupon that will be printed out whenever a Downtown Guide makes a recommendation or an individual guest requests walking directions to a particular location. In addition, there is the opportunity to have rotating sponsors or promote special events within the 120-block district.

Intercept Surveys:
- The software's powerful platform allows Eponic, Inc. to develop customer intercept surveys that are tabulated and plotted on an interactive map which allows organizations to quickly identify trends.

Environmental Responsibility
- The elimination of paper reports reduces the environmental impact of the Downtown Guides program.

PARTICIPANTS
The DLBA partnered with Eponic, Inc. to implement the PDA Program. The Eponic Team, lead by John Gilman, is a group of battle-hardened software industry veterans focused on developing software and mobile applications specifically for Business Improvement Districts.

PARTICIPANTS (cont.)

DLBA Operations Manager Mary Coburn worked closely with Eponic, Inc.'s staff to address the business district nuances during the development of the program. Coburn continues to be the primary liaison between DLBA and Eponic, Inc.

DLBA contracts with Block-by-Block to provide Downtown Guide personnel for the district. Program Manager Hinson Jackson and Lead Downtown Guides Paulita Elliott and James Costere are responsible for the day-to-day operations.

INNOVATION

This program was developed when Eponic. Inc. recognized a need to monitor the activities of street-level employees while providing information and extraordinary customer service to visitors, employees and business owners in the downtown district.

REPLICATION

The PDA Program is easily replicated and customized for any business district. The software is designed to incorporate the unique specifications of each downtown area's geography, business database, and user functions. Although the DLBA chooses to equip each Downtown Guide with a PDA, downtown areas with greater budgetary restrictions could choose to provide only certain guides or areas with PDA systems. Relative to training, the technology was enthusiastically embraced by the Downtown Guides and supervisors.

REPRESENTATION

Use of the PDA Program has raised the bar on professionalism by bringing attention to detail, real-world metrics and accountability to the forefront. Downtown Guides carrying the iconic aluminum-cased PDAs are perceived as employing 21st century solutions to confront the challenges facing Downtown Long Beach.

OUTCOME

The PDA Program has contributed to the success of the Downtown Guide Program by:
- Reducing paperwork and time spent compiling data
- increasing time on the street interacting with the public
- Providing accurate data that is easily reviewed
- Improving database management
- Having the ability to generate revenue through sponsorships

CONCLUSION

Putting technology to work has empowered the Downtown Guides to work more efficiently by allowing them to spend more time on the streets interacting with the public. Providing business information and point-to-point walking directions is a valuable service to the visitors of Downtown Long Beach.

Software features allow the easy generation of reports and the ability to access data that in the past proved to be tedious, time consuming and ineffective. Management personnel are equipped to monitor daily activities ensuring that service is being provided to all areas of the district.