

## AT A GLANCE

### Customer

CSK Auto  
cskauto.com

### Country

United States

### Industry

Retail

### Customer Profile

With 15,000 employees and more than 1,280 retail stores across 22 states, CSK Auto is one of the largest auto parts retailers in the United States.

### Challenge

CSK's dispersed sales force needed access to comprehensive, up-to-date ordering and availability information.

### Solution

A line-of-business application deployed to Microsoft® Windows® Mobile 5.0®-powered smartphones provides managers and account representatives with real-time, high-speed information whenever and wherever they need it.

### Hardware

Sprint PCS Vision® Smart  
Device PPC-6700

# Auto Parts Retailer Improves Productivity, Customer Service, Competitive Advantage

CSK Auto Inc., one of the largest auto parts retailers in the United States, faced challenges in providing its field personnel with the comprehensive and up-to-date information they needed to support more than 1,280 retail stores. With the help of the former Software Spectrum, the company developed and deployed a secure and cost-effective solution based on Windows Mobile 5.0 software and running on Sprint smartphones. With this solution, more than 300 field managers and representatives now have access to information on pricing, inventory, parts availability and more. The solution also enables CSK's commercial sales managers to provide commercial customers with real-time quotes and place orders on the spot. As a result, CSK Auto's field professionals are now working more productively, providing better customer service and giving the company an enhanced competitive advantage.

*"We wanted a solution with more portability and greater communication capabilities than portable computers could provide, and with a more user-friendly display than was available on handheld computers."*

### Larry Buresh,

Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer, CSK Auto, Inc.

### Challenge

Headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona, CSK Auto is one of the largest auto parts retailers in the United States. The company employs 15,000 people and operates retail stores from Ohio to Hawaii, under the brands Checker Auto Parts, Schuck's Auto Supply, Kragen Auto Parts, and Murray's Discount Auto Stores.

According to Senior LAN Manager Peter M. Sand, CSK Auto is committed to providing timely and accurate information to its field-based professionals: regional managers, district managers and sales managers. Such information ranges from labor and product costs to real-time quotes to year-to-year weather conditions—

## Software

Microsoft® Windows®  
Server® 2003

Microsoft Exchange  
Server 2003

Microsoft Internet Security  
and Acceleration Server 2004

Microsoft Operations Manager

Microsoft SQL Server 2005

Microsoft Systems  
Management Server

Windows Mobile 5.0

## Results

Improved productivity

Time savings

Better customer service

Enhanced competitive  
advantage

Comprehensive, cost-effective  
functionality

a significant factor that determines when many kinds of auto parts are sold. Yet until recently, the corporate organization found it challenging to deliver this information in a comprehensive and timely manner.

For example, without making a special request to data analysts, district managers could access little more than labor costs and year-to-year profitability for any given store and that information was available only in a report that they would have to print and carry with them. "If a district manager happened to forget a report or if they needed more information while they were on the road, they had to call the corporate office and ask the data analysts to access it. They might even have to make a trip back to corporate," says Sand. "Similarly, to provide a quote or order a part for a commercial customer, they had to call the local or regional warehouse, and get the information they needed from the person who answered the call."

For several years, Larry Buresh, senior vice president and chief information officer of CSK Auto, and his team reviewed the potential of developing a mobile solution to provide users with such information through the use of portable or handheld computers. "We wanted a solution with more portability and greater communication capabilities than portable computers could provide, and with a more user-friendly display than was available on handheld computers," Buresh explains.

***"Software Spectrum helped us configure and test the devices, and then they handled the rollout, including device customization, break-fix issues and ongoing maintenance. They also managed the carrier relationship, so we only had to deal with one vendor."***

**Peter M. Sand,**

Senior LAN Manager, CSK Auto

## Solution

CSK Auto's leaders thought they had found a suitable hardware platform in 2005, when mobile phones began to appear with larger, brighter, sharper screens. Buresh and his team settled on the Sprint PCS Vision Smart Device PPC-6700 (Pocket PC Phone Edition) because it ran on Windows Mobile 5.0 software. The size and brightness of the screen plus the easy-to-use keyboard provided the best solution for CSK Auto, Inc.

"We considered some competitive operating system technologies, but because of the Sprint PPC-6700's thorough integration with Microsoft® Office, Windows Mobile 5.0 seemed obvious," Sand says. "Our field professionals are long-time users of Microsoft Office and the Internet Explorer® browser, making Windows Mobile 5.0 the smartest choice in terms of integrated functionality and a familiar user interface."

Sand and his group especially liked such capabilities as the Direct Push technology of Exchange Server 2003 for automatic delivery of e-mail and instant messaging, updated task and calendar functions, and support for a Global Address List. "Global addressing is essential for field professionals who must be able to access phone numbers and e-mail addresses on the fly," Sand notes.

Security was another factor in the decision. "The whole point of building this solution was to give district managers and field representatives a tool that they could keep with them while traveling," Sand says. "By supporting the remote 'wiping' of a lost device, for example, Windows Mobile 5.0 would enable us to offer users just such a tool without worrying about the security or confidentiality of vital data."

Sand says the final factor that led his group to a Windows Mobile-based solution was the support of professionals from Microsoft Gold-certified partner Software Spectrum, who began working with CSK Auto in 2000 on other aspects of their software portfolio. "Software Spectrum spoke very highly of the Windows Mobile 5.0 software, and that helped confirm that we had made the right decision," he says.

Software Spectrum was chosen as a deployment partner for CSK's mobility initiative because of its end-to-end capabilities. "Software Spectrum helped us configure and test the devices, and then they handled the rollout, including device customization, break-fix issues and ongoing maintenance," says Sand. "They also managed the carrier relationship, so we only had to deal with one vendor."

By mid-2006, the solution was in use by 250 field professionals across the 22 states in which CSK Auto does business. "This was our first mass-quantity production rollout of Windows Mobile 5.0, and it went extremely well," Buresh reports.

The custom application pulls data from an IBM iSeries database, formats it as Web pages designed to fit the Sprint PPC-6700 screens, and "pushes" it to the phones using an EV-DO high-speed network. The solution also leverages Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 communication and collaboration server software, and Internet Security and Acceleration Server 2004.

***"The mobility solution is providing clear improvements in both customer service and productivity for district managers, field representatives and store personnel."***

**Peter M. Sand,**  
Senior LAN Manager, CSK Auto

## **Benefits**

CSK Auto has reported a number of ongoing benefits from the new mobile solution, including support for keeping field personnel more closely tied to the business, gains in productivity, an easier way for field personnel to serve their customers, enhanced competitive advantage and cost savings.

### **A connected sales force**

Perhaps the most significant benefit CSK Auto district managers and field representatives realized is real-time, high-speed access to parts in surrounding stores and ordering information for their commercial customers. "The combination of Windows Mobile 5.0 and EV-DO technology provides a continual flow of up-to-the-minute information, so the corporate office can be in constant communication with the field," Sand reports. "This helps keep our district managers and field representatives who log on average some 25,000 miles per year on the road better connected to the business."

That information, Sand adds, is making an enormous difference in the way district managers and field representatives do their jobs. "No longer does someone have to return to the office to pick up a report, because now the necessary information is always just a few key taps away," he says. "The savings in travel time and costs is significant."

### **Improved customer service**

The solution provides an approach to serving customers that CSK Auto field professionals did not have before. With the clear, sharp screen of the Sprint PPC-6700, users can display information to commercial customers on the spot. They can act on that information as well, providing a quote or placing an order, without diverting attention from the customer to place a phone call to the warehouse.

"Because the commercial field representative is placing the order directly into the system, hours can ultimately be saved in delivering the part to the customer," Sand says. "Also, ordering professionals at the store now have fewer phone calls to answer. The mobility solution is providing clear improvements in both customer service and productivity for district managers, field representatives and store personnel."

For Sand, the improvement in customer service is a "huge" advantage. "With this solution, we can do so much more for our customers, so much more quickly," he points out. "We can help them assess inventories, reset ordering volumes and transfer stock from one location to another. We can answer their questions about historical inventory levels, how discounts may have affected product sales and how to ensure optimal inventory levels. These kinds of services help us cultivate lifetime customer relationships. To my knowledge no competitor as yet has a solution quite like this."

### **Cost-effective functionality**

Better yet, the solution is proving to be highly cost-effective. "Our Windows Mobile 5.0-enabled Sprint PPC-6700 mobile phones give us functionality that previously was reserved for solutions deployed on portable computers," Buresh reports. "Yet the hardware for this solution costs less than 15 percent of what we would be paying to outfit users with similarly equipped portable computers and separate cell phones."

Perhaps best of all, the solution has been successful among users. "People have integrated the Mobile 2005 device into their daily regime," Sand says, which comes as no surprise to him. "Whether you're looking at functionality, ease of use, cost-effectiveness, or just the ability to translate technology into a competitive corporate advantage, this Windows Mobile 5.0-based solution is one of the best solutions we have rolled out to our mobile workforce."

**For more information, speak with a Insight Mobility Solutions Expert at 1-888-811-4590, or e-mail [mobilitysolutions@insight.com](mailto:mobilitysolutions@insight.com).**

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