PowerStream

Canadian utility company gains greater efficiency with RFgen Inventory Control Solution.

At a glance...

Industry
Public Utility

Application
Inventory Control

Environment
Oracle JD Edwards
EnterpriseOne v8.11

PowerStream, Inc., is the second largest municipally owned electricity distribution company in Ontario, Canada, delivering power to more than 335,000 customers residing in or owning businesses in communities located immediately north of Toronto and in Central Ontario. An award-winning LDC (Local Distribution Company), PowerStream received the Ontario Power Generation LDC Performance Excellence Award from the Electricity Distributors Association and recognition as "Energy Company of the Year" by the Ontario Energy Association for 2010.

The Challenge

When RFgen Software met with PowerStream, they were seeking to gain efficiencies through process improvements at various levels of the organization, including maximizing the use of their Oracle JD Edwards EnterpriseOne system.

PowerStream's corporate-wide changes gave them the perfect opportunity to simultaneously upgrade and improve their warehouse and inventory management procedures. PowerStream chose RFgen's pre-built JD Edwards solutions because they could be customized to PowerStream's unique needs and deliver transactions recorded in real time on mobile data collection devices.

Senior ERP Consultant Clint Hanson was RFgen's project lead for the PowerStream installation. As a JD Edwards Products Certified Professional, Hanson brought 12 years of JD Edwards experience to the project.

PowerStream's Brian Laws was project lead on the client side. "We had a good feeling from the outset about RFgen and their ability to do what we needed," Laws said. "Clint Hanson and his team were up front and open, easy to deal with and very accommodating. That same feeling was evident throughout the whole process of programming, testing and final implementation of the RFgen solutions."

"As a local electricity distribution company with over 300,000 customers, PowerStream has extensive inventory stored in their warehouse and exterior yard," Hanson said. "It consists of everything from nuts and bolts and other small items needed to deliver electricity to homes and businesses to large poles for power lines."

"When you think of data collection, inventory management is the first line of information," Hanson explained. "But PowerStream had difficulty maintaining accurate records of when inventory was moved from one location to another within their indoor and outdoor warehouses or when inventory was moved out to a job." Hanson said.

Warehouse workers had a cumbersome paper-based process that created double work. They first had to make sure their Pick List accurately reflected which items and how many of each they had picked. At the end of the day or shift, they transferred their paperwork to the computer which presented another opportunity for human error.

RFgen

DISCOVER THE POWER OF FLEXIBILITY

The Solution

RFgen's Senior ERP Consultant Hanson customized four RFgen mobile data collection modules to meet PowerStream's needs:

- Inventory Management
  - Transfers
  - Issues
  - Item Inquiries
  - Cycle Counts

- Purchase Order Processing
  - PO Receipts
  - PO Inquiries

- License Plate
  - Pick Items to an LP (Pick items for a Work Order to issue out of the warehouse)
  - LP Inquiries

- Warehouse Management
  - Creation of Directed Item Putaway
  - Putaway by Item

When the final testing phases began, Hanson was on site for the week-long Unit Testing phase. If any changes to the programming were needed, he was there to do it. A bigger test followed — the Conference Room Pilot Test. Together Hanson and Laws put the RFgen solutions through a complete cycle of all the tasks that would be done in a typical day, such as inventory and cycle counts. Hanson also trained PowerStream personnel on the new system.

The Result

PowerStream's cumbersome paper-based inventory system is now a thing of the past. All items in their warehouses are now visible and easy to track. RFgen's mobile solution helped PowerStream to:

- Eliminate inefficient, time-wasting paper procedures.
- Locate items faster.
- Maintain up-to-date accurate inventory counts.
- Keep track of current inventory, new items coming into the warehouse and items going out to jobs.

Additional benefits include RFgen's smooth integration of the inventory functions with purchase order processing, license plate IDs and warehouse management.

"By streamlining our inventory processes, RFgen's mobile data collection solutions have allowed our employees to do a better job," Laws said. "They now have time to take care of other responsibilities they weren't able to handle previously."

Laws emphasized that, thanks to RFgen, PowerStream has a much better handle on how they store items. "We would often stick inventory items where they would fit at the time. We knew we had them, but later we didn't know where they were. Now we're receiving items through a 'staging area', so we can track which items have moved into the warehouse and which ones are still out in the yard."

Laws offered a word of advice to other companies getting ready to upgrade their systems: "Make sure you know what processes you want and what testing needs to be done, including validation of alpha and/or numeric coding within JD Edwards. We didn't do that properly, so there were some problems we had to deal with as they arose."

"Even though we made big changes during implementation, RFgen always understood what we were looking for and what we needed," Laws concluded. "Their main goal was to make things right, make us happy and give us the best product at the end of the day."

Once things settle down with their larger, company-wide changes, PowerStream plans to work with RFgen again. This time, RFgen's customized mobile data collection solutions will be implemented to barcode, log and keep track of PowerStream's assets out in the field. "We will be able to attach barcodes to transformers out in the field," Laws explained. "That will give us the ability to look at the serial numbers at different addresses and know exactly what equipment is there."

North America
Corporate Headquarters
1101 Investment Blvd, Suite 250
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
Phone: (916) 939-4065

www.rfgen.com

RFgen®
DISCOVER THE POWER OF FLEXIBILITY