Presentation: IT Solutions for workplace Safety

Andrew Marshall, Head of Sales, Innovise Software Ltd.

Andrew started by describing the background to the merger in his company that had reinforced their capabilities in management IT systems for the public and private sectors. He added that they had 14 development staff and a further 8 staff providing 24/7 technical support. He commented that there was dormant provision in the 2003 Health & Social Care ACT, which was due to come into effect within months, that would allow the NHS to recover costs of treatment for anyone who had successfully sued a negligent party for compensation. Trends like this would put pressure on SMEs, he said, to work smarter to avoid added costs.

Andrew Marshall

Andrew went on to say that, with respect to the expertise in the audience, he knew that he did not have to mention in detail the various legal requirements for risk assessment, risk control measures, monitoring procedures and auditing systems. He did emphasise, however, that the Mobile Solutions that his company offered fitted in nicely: -

a. Where a recommendation leads to a specific action, or process AND
b. Where the recommended action needs constant checking.

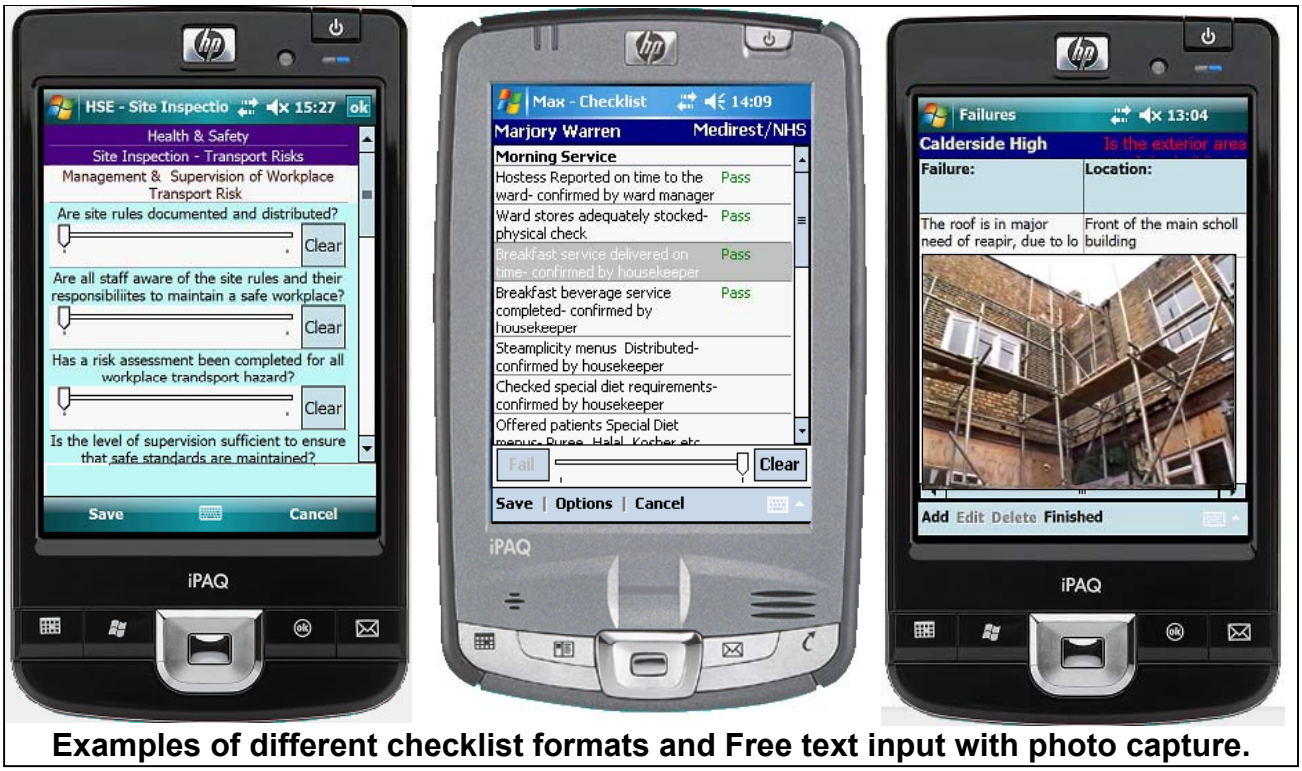
In support of this, he cited a HSE Checklist for Workplace Transport. Another example he quoted was from the Coca-Cola system for checking sub-contractors' performance, relative to the contract terms, on the 2nd/3rd/4th days of the work. Mobile Solutions, Andrew suggested, could offer so much more support to: -

- Increase your ability to cover risks
- Give peace of mind that issues are under control
- Provide readily accessible audit trails AND
- Provide analysis and review of events and conditions.

Regarding HOW you do this, Andrew said that it is a suitable blend of paper and IT systems, such as the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) requirement for signed checklists to demonstrate absolute compliance with safety-critical procedures. The typical system would: -

- Create checklists (Existing manual forms are easily replicated)
- Schedule when checks occur (Choosing What/When/Where and Who)
- Complete the check (Results recorded as easily as ticks on paper and in different formats)
- Capture failures (can be Defined Answers, or free text and photographs from built-in cameras to support failure verdict and to identify areas of risk)
- Follow up variances

- Create reports (signatures can be captured for the database.
- Create paper forms, as necessary.



Examples of different checklist formats and Free text input with photo capture.

Other features include: -

- Weightings applied to hazards, like Electrical, as opposed to lighted candles, to develop action priorities
- Prioritised schedule of inspections, using the Red/Amber/Green (RAG) colour codes for overdue inspections
- Screens that remain hidden, until related Risk Assessments are completed.
- Improved data handling because keying-in is eliminated and delays are reduced.
- Reports can be linked to stores stock analysis and new parts/materials ordered.
- Status of submitted reports is enhanced.
- Outputs from original date can be reproduced.

Andrew quoted a case study in North Ayrshire Council, Catering & Cleaning Division conducted four quality assessments per month in each Area (20 in total). This took 10 hours per assessment and 4 hours of administration and re-keying of information into an Excel spreadsheet for manipulation. The Innovise system reduce the audit time from 10 hours down to 2.5, whilst the admin. time was cut by an average of 3hours 40 minutes per assessment. Total time saved per month was 150 hours, which is equivalent to a full time post, resulting in considerable increases in productivity and corresponding cost savings. It was also easier to analyse the assessment results gave a better focus on the questions they raised.

Members' Questions

Tim Prestage of Tim Prestage Ltd. asked if it was possible to change questions after the system was set up. Andrew replied that it was very easy because it had to accommodate changes in standards, for example. Clients were given training on how to carry out modifications for that reason. The checklists were a flexible format.

Tony Hall of Willmott Dixon asked if it was easy to use a free text entry. Andrew said that it was but you had to remember that the technology did not allow you to analyse free text. Consequently, it was better to use a system of drop-down lists to rationalise the choice within a flexible input format.

Dave Lilly of National Grid Metering asked about real time proof of work completed at a specific location. Andrew said that the mobile devices could also GPS functionality to capture such data and that Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID), fixed at the location/plant could be scanned before and/or after entry of data.

Bob Cole commented that mobile date systems could de-skill the role of the inspector, by over-reliance on checklists. Andrew responded by agreeing that, although it might be possible, the checklists could be supplemented by "any other" questions to keep the process more meaningful.

Mark Hoare of the University of Birmingham commented that such a system was very useful for companies with a high number of assets. David Hughes of Hughes Business Services, asked if the Personal Data Assistants (PDAs) could be linked by cable to PCs and Andrew confirmed that they could.

Dave Lilley asked if the PDAs could be used for photographing Electricity Meters and Andrew confirmed that it could be done before and after. H also quoted en example of a fly-tipping investigation that used time-lapse photography and runway checks for debris at airports that used the same technique.

Chris Peck asked if technology upgrades were available for the PDAS and Andrew said that the range would make it suitable for the job e.g. plug-in docking vs. WiFi downloading, or Waterproofing or Heavy Duty designs.

Ed Friend commented that form his experience as an Inspector, PDAs could provide excellent evidence for the Courts and Andrew added that they also made trend analysis possible.

Ed summed up the presentation by saying he had found it most interesting and, judging by the quantity and quality of the questions, the audience would agree. In closing the meeting, he asked the audience to join him in showing their appreciation.