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Toughbooks in Action

Kleenmaid franchisees given new tools of the trade - Panasonic Toughbooks - for increased efficiency and better customer service

Kleenmaid has given its Customer Service franchisees new tools of the trade via a Service Management System (SMS) running on Panasonic Toughbooks, for increased reliability, efficiency and better customer service.

Kleenmaid is Australia's largest direct retailer of kitchen and laundry appliances. In October 1995, it established an Australia-wide retail network to better sell, support and service its products, maintain highly competitive pricing and ensure exceptional service.

Kleenmaid has a dedicated franchise network of service partners to repair Kleenmaid appliances at the customer's home. Through the franchise agreement, service partners are required to have a new Toyota Hi-Ace service van fitted out with a Panasonic CF-18 Toughbook.

The Toughbook is mounted into the service truck in a cradle with a remote charger, Eftpos machine for payment and a Bluetooth printer.

TOUGHBOOK®
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The Toughbook runs SMS software exclusively developed for the Customer Service Franchise network. The sophisticated yet user-friendly system easily and efficiently manages customer and service call details and diary; customer payments; technical information; spare parts stock levels and automatic replenishment; along with advanced reporting facilities so that service partners can track their performance and business progress.

John Lavender, General Manager, Customer Service, Kleenmaid, said, "The Toughbook is, in effect, a tradesman's tool. Therefore, we needed a unit that would enable our service partners to carry out their day-to-day administrative tasks but would also withstand the often difficult environments they would be working in, such as wet areas like kitchens and laundries."

Kleenmaid's IT division organises for the franchisees to purchase the Toughbooks directly from reseller TLC Data Systems. The Toughbook was primarily chosen by Kleenmaid due to its ruggedness and durability, as its total cost of ownership (TCO) to the franchisee would ensure they wouldn't be constantly paying for repairs due to damage.

With a moisture and dust resistant LCD, keyboard and touchpad, the CF-18 Toughbook is reliable under varied external environmental conditions.

Its robust design ensures that it is protected against routine drops, knocks and liquid spills, the three leading causes of notebook damage. Both the screen and hard drive are impact-isolated and shock tested, ensuring that the valuable data is protected even if the laptop is dropped.

"It's not uncommon for our service partners to be working on washing machines with wet hands," said Lavender. "The waterproof keyboard ensures they can keep working without ruining the laptop, increasing their efficiency."

Previously, service partners would handle service calls themselves, identify what parts were needed to carry out the job and order the spare parts. The entire process could take weeks to complete.

"The implementation of the Toughbook has transformed the way we do business," said Lavender.

"Now, it is simple and virtually paperless, allowing franchisees to enjoy their leisure time rather than having to deal with paperwork after hours."

Through the Service Management System, customer calls are taken via the national call centre. Every customer is entered on the Kleenmaid database when they purchase a product and their file is accessed when they make a service call to identify what appliance they have.

Based on the location of the customer, the best service partner is identified via the postcode allocation system. The job is booked based on the availability of the nearest service partner and jobs are sent to them each morning when they log on to the system.

Once the service partner arrives at the job, they can look up the information for the particular appliance on the Toughbook and work out what parts are required. The service truck is stocked with 500 common parts, providing a high level of first call completion.

Kleenmaid next plans to install a new GPS tracking system on the Toughbooks to improve job allocation.

30 Toughbooks are currently deployed throughout the Kleenmaid Customer Service Force, consisting of 23 franchisees and 7 technical assistants.



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