

# 360

SCHEDULING



## Managing Change



### ABOUT TECHNOLOG

*Technolog has over 25 years' experience in the design and manufacture of battery-powered data logging, meter reading and pressure control products for the water, gas and electricity utilities. The company is widely regarded as the market leader, with an installed base of over 300,000 monitoring devices.*

[www.technolog.com](http://www.technolog.com)

Technolog customers include many large UK and European utility companies spanning gas, water and electricity. The company's products cover a variety of applications, monitoring water usage and leakage, electricity consumption, gas temperature and pressure.

Technolog is at the forefront of developments in smart metering which is changing the face of the metering market. The Government strategy to extend their use to consumers will change it still further. Although Technolog supplies its products to customers for self-installation it has an increasingly busy installation, maintenance and data collection operation trading as Utilitec Services with 80 field-based engineers working from three UK locations. Managing this operation has become more complicated over time leading to a review of the systems in use and the work processes involved.

Under the previous system Technolog would receive work from its customers and these would be imported into Technolog's own database application. Printed job sheets from this application would then be given to field engineers to schedule accordingly. Many would spend some of their Sundays, preparing their work schedules for the following week. Very often engineers had more work than they could handle and the responsibility for appointment booking restricted their productivity. Relieving engineers of this responsibility would have obvious benefits.

[www.360scheduling.com](http://www.360scheduling.com)

*"In time we will go fully 'dynamic'. That is to say we will fully integrate the backend system with the scheduling system and the mobile data system. That way we can automate the dispatch process, have complete visibility of what is going on in the field and run in real time. The 360 Dynamic Scheduling Engine will receive inputs from the field and alter the schedules accordingly. That way we can send jobs to engineers one at a time, which means we can respond to urgent requests more easily. Once an engineer completes a job the central system will be triggered to send down the next job."*

Andrew Oliver  
Software Development and IT  
Manager

With 9,000 jobs in the system at any one time, many with 3 day SLAs, the size of the scheduling and appointment booking task was growing as Andrew Oliver, Software Development and IT Manager explained. "In order to cope, once a week and two weeks in advance, two senior managers would draw up the work schedules by working through two huge spreadsheets produced by the system. This work was normally done outside normal working hours. The 3 day SLAs were managed on an ad hoc basis. Essentially we were becoming the victims of our own success and we had to look closely at our processes to enable us to handle the growing volume of work."

The first thing Technolog decided to do was to equip their field engineers with mobile devices so that jobs could be automatically pushed out to the field wirelessly. This has enabled the company to dispense with many of the paper driven processes. All progress reporting, arrival on site, job completion etc is now communicated back to the main system in real time by the same means.

Despite the efficiencies generated by these changes Technolog also wanted to bring appointment booking in house to relieve the engineers of this burden. That also meant making more sense out of the jobs coming in on a daily basis to enable the dispatch staff to take this on. This is where the scheduling option came into play.

"We now have a 360 Scheduling solution in place, which we know can grow with the company," said Andrew Oliver. "The main database application automatically sends an XML file containing all the jobs currently in the system to the 360 Dynamic Scheduling Engine at a preset time each day. This is configured with a complex set of parameters and business rules including SLAs and sends back a much more efficient schedule than we could achieve by other means. We do a second run at 7:00 pm every night, taking into account everything that has happened during the day, which then produces the schedules for the next day. The main system then pushes these jobs out directly to the field technicians via the mobile data system.

The 360 Dynamic Scheduling Engine also produces the 'first cut' of the jobs that need to be appointed, finding gaps in the schedules, which can then be offered to customers by service centre staff. They can also look at the schedules to offer an alternative if the time slot offered is not convenient.

These developments have introduced efficiencies and changes in working practices that have improved the performance of Technolog's installation and maintenance operation:

- Significant reduction in paperwork both in the field and in the back office
- Technicians have been relieved of scheduling and appointment booking responsibilities so they can concentrate on installation and maintenance
- Job schedules are created automatically and make best use of available resources
- Appointment booking is streamlined
- Improved SLA performance and customer service

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