

Case Study

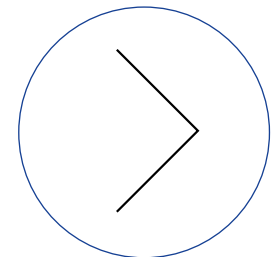
Vital Human Resources



Mobile Voice Recording Solution

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If there's one thing that's of paramount importance for crews working to repair and maintain the UK's rail system, it's safety. And for all safety protocol to be truly effective, you need to have a failsafe communication system that's not just clear and reliable, but also gives you the option to record and play back conversations too.



For the team at Vital Human Resources, who are responsible for the supply of engineers to Network Rail, this last specification is crucial. One of the innovations when supplying engineers for on-site rail maintenance and repair is that all conversations between engineers and their base of operations are recorded, and that all data is managed (including digital images) and archived effectively. This data (under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act) is shared with Network Rail, should the operational procedure or the conduct of any engineer be called into question, and for process improvement.

A KEY PART OF POSSESSION MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

Put simply, to comply with tender specifications and forthcoming contractual requirements, Vital Human Resources needed a fully integrated communications network that was both future-proofed and reliable. The specific use of the system was in 'Possession Management' situations, where a track is closed overnight for repairs and maintenance. Because of the schedules in place, these operations are incredibly time sensitive, so the safety of teams into the early hours when rail services are resumed is of particular importance, as is the exact information passed between individuals.

An integrated communications system that highlights call registration and recording helps to achieve a higher level of trackside safety by providing playback of any telephone conversations between team members.

A 'DIGITAL RECEIPT'

Like all other major institutions, Network Rail has a duty of care to ensure any staff working on its projects, whether employed directly by the organisation or sub-contracted through an outside agency, operate in a safe manner. This includes not only their conduct trackside, but how they interact with other members of their team and off-site contacts as well.

By providing a call recording process that effectively delivers an instantly accessible on-site storage of all communications data, Streamline helps both Vital Human Resource and Network Rail to fulfil their obligations, without imposing a 'Big Brother' regime that workers might find intrusive.

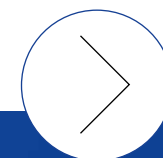
INSTANT AND IRREFUTABLE PROOF

This 'digital receipt' of every voice, text and SMS message between trackside teams and off-site contacts provides instant and irrefutable proof of conversations, instructions and even the location of team members.

The availability of a playback system means that the content of conversations can be instantly verified, without the need for in-depth, costly and prolonged investigations.

EXAMPLE 1

A member of a trackside team working on a Possession Management operation realised that he had left his laptop (an essential piece of equipment for his role) at home. He left site and went home to collect the laptop before returning. Upon getting back to site, he changed to the other end of the works (over a mile away) which led to rumours he had left and not come back! After investigating the GPS tracking data, it was immediately proven that the worker had indeed done exactly what he had said, and the issue was resolved within minutes. This not only exonerated the worker, but also excluded any requirement for possible suspension while a formal investigation was pursued.



EXAMPLE 2

During the course of operations over a weekend, it was deemed that a member of the Possession Management Team had not given a specific piece of information to the Rail Network that was safety critical. Due to the nature of works, the protocol is to stand down the individual while an investigation ensues. Upon playing back the recording of the worker it was proven that the information had been given, therefore the worker could immediately resume duties. However, it was noted that poor communication from both sides had led to this misunderstanding, and it was identified that training be undertaken to improve passing of information.

A SYSTEM THAT REPRESENTS 'SOFT SAVINGS'

The cost savings of the Streamline system may not be recouped in 'hard savings' as such, but both Vital Human Resources and Network Rail both recognise the significant 'soft savings' represented by the service.

These soft savings manifest themselves as a drastic reduction in the amount of time spent in meetings and investigation teams in dispute resolution (as evidence is immediately accessible and provides irrefutable proof of the situation). While the 'hard cash' savings may be, technically, unquantifiable, the implementation of the system for on and off-site communications verification and GPS location saves both time and money.

Both Vital Human Resources and Network Rail have saved considerable man-hours in resolving situations by employing Streamline's instant playback facility. Both organisations now embrace the system as part of their day-to-day operations, particularly in Possession Management works where immediate resolution can also reduce the amount of man-hours lost due to these investigations. This, in turn, has a positive effect on productivity, and provides peace of mind to everyone connected with trackside operations and monitoring.

A TRAINING TOOL

While trackside safety (particularly in Possession Management situations) is the primary purpose for employing the Streamline system, Vital Human Resources have also found it to be an effective training tool. Because conversations are recorded, operators have the ability to use playbacks as tools in best practice training sessions or new staff orientation scenarios.

Because there is an agreement between both Vital Human Resources and Network Rail to use the Streamline system already in place, the use of recordings falls within the guidelines laid out in the Data Protection Act.

'BIG BROTHER' – HOW WORKERS REACT TO THE STREAMLINE SYSTEM

One of the biggest concerns is how workers will react to having their conversations text messaging and even digital visual files recorded, and accessible to third parties. Streamline only monitors conversations on work-issued phones and devices where installed. It does not record personal conversations made on the workers' own private devices.

Rather than perceiving the system as a 'Big Brother' intrusion, teams working trackside have found it to be a reassurance. Not only does it verify conversations with recordings that can then be used to instantly resolve issues, but it also helps to address situations that might otherwise have been missed, such as whether an instruction was phoned through and received.

Workers have accepted that the system is in place for their protection. They are aware that their conversations are being recorded, and they have signed to show they accept and acknowledge the use of this system.

FUTURE USE

The use of the Streamline system has convinced Vital Human Resources that it benefits their operation in six significant ways:

- Safety and security of trackside operations, and the teams working in Possession Management situations
- Instant and irrefutable proof of the content of conversations between workers and off-site contacts
- 'Soft savings' through the elimination of lengthy and expensive dispute resolution consultations
- Drastic reduction of the time spent in confirming or clarifying conversations, with absolute proof instantly accessible from playback recordings
- A useful and effective training tool
- Provides reassurance to the client (in this instance Network Rail) that best practice methods are being used, and that all vital information (including texts and digital images) can be recorded for later assessment

The overriding benefit is in the improvement of on-site safety for Possession Management teams. This alone has convinced Vital Human Resources to incorporate the Streamline system as part of their ongoing operational practices, and is a key feature in tender applications going forward.

