



Customer Story

Manufacturing Industry

Mobile employees work more productively, effectively and cost efficiently with PowerTerm WebConnect



“Because we can access our desktop remotely, we can do everything that we would normally do in the office, from any location. This has enabled us to improve a variety of business processes and gain widespread benefits.”

Sean McGuigan
Managing Director
Ultra Building Products



More and more employees – across almost all industries – are working away from the office. Organisations therefore need to find ways to help these mobile workers to perform their roles securely and efficiently, while minimising costs.

Based in Northern Ireland, Ultra Building Products is an example of a company that has addressed the challenges associated with mobile working. Through its use of Ericom’s PowerTerm WebConnect product, Ultra Building Products has succeeded in improving the effectiveness of both its mobile sales representatives and its directors. The company now benefits from improved employee productivity, lower costs, more efficient business processes and greater business control.

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INDUSTRY
Manufacturing

CUSTOMER
Ultra Building Products

PRODUCT
Ericom® PowerTerm® WebConnect RemoteView

CHALLENGES

- Facilitate effective mobile working
- Remove duplication of effort
- Reduce inefficiency in sales order management processes
- Improve accountability for sales orders
- Address issues with payroll production
- Improve access to time critical information
- Avoid unnecessary journeys

SOLUTION

- Deploy Ericom’s PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView
- Equip sales representatives and directors with laptop computers
- Enable access to office based desktop devices from anywhere, using in-built MyPCView feature
- Provide secure remote access to core business systems, including CCTV footage

BENEFITS

- Greater employee mobility and flexibility
- Removed duplication of effort
- Increased sales productivity, leading to improved production planning and stock management
- Better account management of customers and orders
- More accurate production of payroll, week after week
- Secure access to real time information from anywhere
- Reduced travel costs, by eliminating unnecessary travel

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Ultra Building Products manufactures and distributes a large range of products for the construction industry, farm, home and garden. The company has built a reputation in Northern Ireland for producing high quality products and innovating to meet the needs of the industries and customers that it serves. It proudly promotes its policy of continuous product development and aims to deliver products that offer quality, reliability and value for money.

Ultra Building's policy of continuous improvement extends to more than just product development, however. The company has expanded and developed its operations over recent years by pursuing ways to improve its core business processes. It purchased PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView to help it address some specific challenges in one business area, but found that it could use the solution to effect continuous improvement in many other business processes too.

A LOT OF DUPLICATION OF WORK

In 2006, Ultra Building Products became aware that its sales order management processes were inefficient. It had a team of sales representatives who worked all over Ireland. When they received a customer order, they completed the order form manually and faxed it to head office from their homes in the evenings. A data input clerk at head office was then responsible for entering all of the orders into the company's production system. Every Friday, the sales representatives were required to come into the office to check the orders on the system.

As a result of this process, there was a substantial time delay between orders being placed by customers and orders being added to the production control system. Valuable time was wasted by sales representatives every Friday, and the use of faxes was costly and inconvenient. "There was a lot of duplication of work," says Sean McGuigan, Managing Director at Ultra Building.

AN INEXPENSIVE AND USER-FRIENDLY SOLUTION

To resolve the challenges associated with the company's sales order management processes, Ultra Building Products decided to invest in new technology that would enable its sales team to take more responsibility for their own orders. It planned to equip its sales representatives with laptop computers, but needed an easy, inexpensive and secure way for them to access the core sales order applications remotely.

"We were aware of Citrix, but this was quite an expensive option," says Mr. McGuigan. Ultra Building Products discussed its challenges with Loughtec and asked them for help. A short while later, Loughtec introduced Ultra Building Products to Ericom, and proposed Ericom's PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView solution as a viable alternative to Citrix.

The PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView product is a server-based solution that allows users to

access central applications from any remote location via the Internet. The solution is very user-friendly and offers high levels of access security. Ultra Building Products carried out a full evaluation of the product prior to selecting it. "We found that it is very easy to use and it provided very quick connections," explains Mr. McGuigan. "The price was also substantially cheaper than Citrix."

Ultra Building Products was able to deploy PowerTerm WebConnect very quickly with support from Loughtec. "It took a matter of days rather than weeks," Mr. McGuigan recalls. "We got it up and running very quickly and, from the word go, it has worked very well for us."

A MORE EFFICIENT SALES PROCESS

Now, all of the company's sales representatives can enter their own orders directly into the production system from their laptops on the road or from their home computers. "The sales team can now connect to our

“I haven't come up against any situation where it hasn't been able to do the job for us, and I've used it from three or four different countries.”

business applications from anywhere with an Internet connection," says Mr. McGuigan. "They spend less time in the office and more time with customers."

The data input clerk was given a more rewarding role in the company. "There is no duplication of effort which leads to time savings," explains Mr. McGuigan. "There are also fewer mistakes because the sales representatives enter the orders onto the system themselves."



Sales representatives can also log on every day and see the accounts for which they are responsible. "Previously, sales representatives relied on sales reports that were up to a week old," says Mr. McGuigan. "Now, they have immediate access to up-to-date information about all their accounts and are more accountable for them."

Most significantly, new sales appear immediately on the company's production system, which has helped the company to improve its production planning and the management of stock levels.

A HOST OF OTHER BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS

Use of PowerTerm WebConnect quickly resolved all of the challenges that the company had previously experienced in its sales order management process. However, the benefits of the solution were not limited to just this one part of the business. Ultra Building Products quickly found that the Ericom product presented an opportunity to make a host of other business improvements.

PowerTerm WebConnect has a free in-built MyPCView feature, which lets users access their office desktop computers remotely and securely and use it just as if they were sitting at the device in the office. Mr. McGuigan explains: "Because we can access our desktop remotely, we can do everything that we would normally do in the office, from any location. This has enabled us to improve a variety of business processes and gain widespread benefits."

For example, use of PowerTerm WebConnect has led to improvements in the way that the company's payroll is managed. There are only a small number of

people within the business with the authority to operate the payroll. Therefore, in the past, if key people were out of the office, an approximate payroll used to be prepared in advance and then adjustments were made in pay

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packets the following week. This approach created additional work for the finance team and was unpopular with employees.

Now, key personnel can use PowerTerm WebConnect to access all necessary systems remotely, if they are out of the office. "Even if I am out of the country, I can log on, see attendance records and do everything I need to do for the payroll," explains Mr. McGuigan. "PowerTerm WebConnect enables me to produce the payroll with accuracy every time."

A CLOSE EYE ON THE BUSINESS

In addition, directors at Ultra Building Products can now use PowerTerm WebConnect to remotely view CCTV footage of the factory and business premises. This saves time and travel costs to and from the business, and also allows directors to keep a much closer eye on the business, when they are off-site.

For example, directors can use PowerTerm WebConnect to remotely access CCTV footage and view equipment monitors in the galvanising plant. When the power returns after a power cut, the gas supply should reset automatically. However, in the past, directors used

to have to make a trip into the plant following power failures just to check the gas supply. Now, directors can easily view the unit's control panel from home and avoid making unnecessary journeys.

Similarly, if a team is experiencing problems, loading a lorry for example, a director can log in from the road or from home and view CCTV footage of the loading bay and factory floor remotely. He can then get a better understanding of the problem and talk to the team about resolutions.

"Certain directors around the business use PowerTerm WebConnect regularly to view CCTV footage," says Mr. McGuigan. "Many of them live ten miles or more away from the factory, so it can save them a lot of time and unnecessary travel."

A CONVENIENT AND RELIABLE SOLUTION

Ultra Building Products has been using PowerTerm WebConnect for over three years and is extremely pleased with the performance and reliability of the solution. "We haven't had any problems with the system at all," says Mr. McGuigan. "I haven't come up against any situation where it hasn't been able to do the job for us, and I've used it from three or four different countries."

The company hasn't carried out any formal return on investment assessment for its use of Ericom products, but Mr. McGuigan is certain that the product saves money for the business. He concludes: "With the time efficiencies and convenience of the solution, everyone within Ultra accepts there must be big cost savings."

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