

CASE STUDY – EDINBURGH BUS TOURS

Edinburgh's leading bus tour company, Edinburgh Bus Tours, uses second generation of Casio handhelds for ongoing driver and ticket operator enablement.

Deployment of Casio IT-9000's running BNE's *TicketPOS* solution assists stock control, manages refunds, provides additional marketing opportunities and eliminates entry errors at point of transaction.

Situation

Millions of visitors worldwide flock to see the designated UNESCO World Heritage city of Edinburgh and have been doing so on open top tour buses for around one hundred years. One of the leading hop-on, hop-off sightseeing tour companies is Edinburgh Bus Tours, owned by Lothian Buses; offering popular routes that provide a unique insight into the City. The Company is also one of the leading outlets for the sale of combined travel and attraction packages, such as resale of vouchers to Scotland's leading tourist venue, Edinburgh Castle. As the UK's second largest sightseeing bus company, the volume of transactions performed by each operator is incredibly high, with seasonal peaks in the busy summer months. To effectively facilitate such levels of business garnered from mobile sales, the Company constantly strives to maintain reliability and enhanced functionality.

Background

No strangers to Casio handheld technology, the Company had for many years used the Casio IT-3000 device loaded with BNE's *TicketPOS* software. When a new updated Casio IT-9000 launched offering a lighter model with a larger screen and additional functionality, BNE recommended they consider an upgrade. Kenny

Campbell, Tour Operation Manager, Edinburgh Bus Tours elaborates on the key refresh factors: *"We had been running the previous version robustly since 2006, so this was an ergonomic refresh in many ways. Our ticket sellers and drivers had grown used to the encompassing hardware and software enabling solution, so when our Casio accredited partner, BNE Electronics recommended that we upgrade to the latest generation of hardware, we took their advice as the hardware was proven as reliable and robust."*

Without requiring a Proof of Concept, BNE demonstrated that the IT-9000, fully enabled with the *TicketPOS* back office software, could offer a greater portfolio of tickets, accept vouchers and split payment methods. In the back office, the software platform remained reassuringly similar but with enhancements offered in management reporting.

The Solution Deployed

Seventy Casio IT 9000 handheld devices with BNE's *TicketPOS* solution were ordered, synchronising to a separate EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) chip and PIN terminal. From the main transaction kiosk on Waverley Bridge, roving Edinburgh Bus Tour operators could now advise tourists on the best routing and ticketing options offering high value, combined entry attraction



and travel 'Royal Tickets', to cut down on visitor queue times. Each operator is supplied with books of Royal Tickets complete with 1D barcodes. Using the IT-9000's scanner, each ticket type is scanned out at the beginning of a shift and scanned back in at the end for total stock control and serial number identification. For the visitor, the IT-9000 then prints a combined travel and entry ticket which contains a valid QR code which also helps control, verify and manage refunds and directly links back to the web site. This extra layer of security and itemised voucher data has provided additional management information on exactly who is selling which tickets and ultimately which attractions are proving most popular, helping guide route expansion and forward planning of expected volume of attraction visitors, year on year.

The process is similar for visitors who elect to use the online Edinburgh Bus website for advance purchases. Again, barcodes recognise and validate the transaction on the IT-9000 and print out multi part tickets via the high speed 80mm wide thermal printer discharging tickets at an impressive 28 lines per second. The large ticket form factor allows messages such as route changes to be added by head office via the handheld, providing just in time information on each passenger route.

In terms of usage, the Casio IT-9000 complete with its new anti-glare, crack resistant touch screen has proved just as reliable as its predecessor, whatever the Scottish weather, rain or shine. It remains water and dust shielded and the 3.7 inch high resolution colour LCD screen with an optimised viewing angle allows easy reading even in the brightest sunlight. Constantly mobile, the units are proving incredibly robust, withstanding the rigours of usage fastened to an operator or within the driver's cabin itself. When inevitable drops do occur no damage is caused. In fact, each unit carries a drop durability test of 1.5m onto concrete surfaces.

For optimal data transfer, a secure WiFi LAN connection is provided at the main kiosk, however when operating remotely, data transfer is facilitated via a 3G network connection. Connection to either network allows data updates such as ticket changes to be automatically synchronised. Using data collected by the IT-9000s, daily intelligence reports are generated back at base for accurate tracking of sales and ticket popularity alongside a record of who is the highest selling operator each day.

From an accounting perspective in the back office, Finance can now set and operate strict cash limits so that no one operator carries excessive ticket revenue at any one time. Refunds and disputes are now fully regulated with a verifiable sequence of ticket issuance in case of query. Data mining from the vast amounts of information contained on the downloaded waybill report allows the Company an enhanced window on the business, complete with critical analysis on tickets, fare types and volume of passengers.

Kenny concludes, *"Extra features are nice to have but without doubt the main reason that we placed trust again in Casio was through the near 100% reliability of its preceding robust model and the solution provided by BNE. The IT-9000 demonstrates the same attributes – in its first year of usage, it has again proven to be a sturdy, lightweight, reliable device, readily accepted by the staff."*

www.casio.co.uk/products
www.edinburghtour.com
www.bneelectronics.com

Key Features

- Rugged but lightweight
- Ergonomically designed
- Fast integrated thermal printer
- Flexible communication options
- Crystal clear colour LCD screen
- Backlit keyboard for low light conditions

