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Pete Peterson has spent the past 15 years focused on mobility consultative sales with organizations in the energy sector, including Oil & Gas, Utilities, and Telecommunications.

Transforming Utility Field Operations with Mobile Devices and GIS

Mobile devices are rapidly transforming field operations for utilities that deliver essential services such as electricity, gas, telephone, and water. Mobile tech can increase front-line operator and field tech utilization, improve real-time communication with dispatchers, and connect faster with customers. Panasonic's Pete Peterson provides insight into how the company's TOUGHBOOK rugged mobile devices combine with third-party geographic information system (GIS) software to extend mobility utilization by empowering field technicians with access to a wide variety of data.

Q. What are the major benefits that utilities can realize from using a mobile GIS system?

Panasonic TOUGHBOOK rugged mobile devices with GIS solutions can improve utilities field operations by giving workers precise, up-to-date information to help them manage assets, plan new networks, predict outages, and comply with city and regional regulations. This results in improved emergency response, network inspection, and maintenance efficiencies. Organizations are able to streamline asset management, such as poles, lines, valves, junctions, meters, and ultimately grid modernization. One of our customers builds solutions specifically for IoT and smart readers, so a meter reader can drive up and down streets, automatically taking readings of each location without having to walk up to the house.

Q. How are different types of utilities deploying TOUGHBOOK systems with mobile GIS in the field, and how do they vary in form-factor selection?

Typically, utilities deploy in a similar manner, whether they're delivering energy, phone, or water. Different job functions lend themselves to different form factors. Panasonic provides a variety of form factors, including laptops, 2-in-1s, tablets, and handhelds, with a choice of Android or Windows 10 operating systems, each purpose-built to take on specific utility work. These rugged devices are designed to withstand the harsh environments utility workers encounter every day—in the plant or in the field—and are used for inspections, asset management,

incident response, surveying, and mapping. TOUGHBOOK models utilize long-life batteries and feature daylight-readable, gloved multi-touch screens ranging from 4.7 to 14 inches in size. For approved vehicle installations, wiring of power and antennas for LTE and/or a dedicated GPS is connected through a device-specific docking station mounted specifically for that vehicle.

Q. What's unique about the TOUGHBOOK product line in what it provides for utilities?

Reliability is probably the most critical concern, and Panasonic leads the industry with the lowest failure rate. You don't want your device to fail. Panasonic strives to provide maximum uptime and connectivity in harsh environments, boosting productivity while enhancing worker experience. TOUGHBOOK mobile devices can include additional features to enhance the value of the device, consolidating peripherals such as bar code readers, RFID, webcams, and cameras.

Q. What's the extra value that purpose-built mobile devices provide over off-the-shelf alternatives?

All TOUGHBOOK devices are designed and manufactured in a Panasonic factory by Panasonic employees. They're supported for an additional seven years, even after a model's end-of-life, so customers can have confidence that their investment will last longer than they have experienced with other hardware manufacturers. In addition, Panasonic ProServices can provide extensive services from helping utilities design their solutions, to field engineering services, customer image management, vehicle mounting and deployment, freeing up IT organizations to focus on more critical activities.

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