



Omaha Public Power District and the TOUGHBOOK® 55: Streamlining Field Operations for a Digital Future

CHALLENGE

Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) is the 12th-largest public power utility in the United States, serving over 400,000 customers across 5,000 square miles in eastern Nebraska. With the electricity demand within OPPD's territory growing at an unprecedented rate, the company needed to digitally transform its operations to ensure its infrastructure was ready and its workers were equipped to handle the additional growth while continuing to provide reliable electricity to customers. To aid in its digital transformation efforts, OPPD required devices that were reliable, supported legacy hardware, and could help field personnel do their jobs efficiently.

SOLUTION

To support its transition to a digital utility, OPPD deployed 200 TOUGHBOOK 55 devices from Panasonic Connect. These semi-rugged devices deliver reliable performance in a range of environments to support field personnel throughout their daily workflows. Acting as the central hub for all operational units, including meter technicians, line crews, troubleshooters, and system protection and automation personnel, the TOUGHBOOK 55 devices

streamlined communication and task execution. By leveraging Panasonic Connect's comprehensive hardware and software integration, OPPD achieved a smooth transition to digital operations.

RESULT

Since deploying TOUGHBOOK 55 devices, OPPD has significantly improved workflow efficiency and accuracy, from setup to field deployment. The devices' design and features eased the burden on the IT team, ensuring seamless integration into existing operations. In the field, the rugged devices have become indispensable tools, utilized round-the-clock by field personnel for numerous tasks. Equipped with real-time geographic information system (GIS) data and essential business tools, such as access to timesheets, workers can swiftly respond to outage events and navigate between assignments with ease. The durability of TOUGHBOOK 55 devices ensures reliability in all environments, from direct sun to heavy rain. And with enhanced connectivity, field personnel can focus on delivering top-tier energy services to OPPD's growing customer base, marking a significant step toward a digitally-driven future for the company and its community.

CASE STUDY



Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) was founded in 1946 and has grown to become the 12th-largest public power utility in the nation. Covering over 5,000 square miles in eastern Nebraska, OPPD serves a customer base exceeding 400,000 customers – and electricity demand in the territory is growing at an unprecedented rate.

To accommodate the growing demand for electricity, OPPD embarked on a journey toward becoming a digital utility company. This shift involved integrating sophisticated data management systems and robust communications networks to allow OPPD to collect, store, and analyze electricity usage data in real-time. The goal was to enhance operational efficiencies and improve customer communication.

To help facilitate the transition, OPPD sought a reliable solution to replace outdated consumer-level devices prone to inefficiencies and operational limitations such as connectivity delays, bottlenecks, and compatibility issues. The company also needed to transition from manual, paper-based systems to digital platforms, ensuring accurate data capture and seamless accessibility in the field.

OPPD chose to deploy 200 semi-rugged TOUGHBOOK 55 devices across multiple units, including meter technicians, troubleshooters, line crews, and system protection and automation personnel. Serving as the central hub for information and task execution, these devices enabled field personnel to smoothly receive work orders, conduct digital asset inspections, access real-time location data, and input crucial information – all from a single device.

“Our field personnel work tirelessly every day to address customer needs, so having technology that can keep up with their job demands is paramount.” – Brent Saltzman, Manager, Endpoint Engineering at Omaha Public Power District

The devices are especially helpful for troubleshooters who work on a 12-hour rotation and rely on their rugged devices to keep them informed of new and existing jobs throughout the day. For example, if a customer loses power, a troubleshooter will receive the location details of the outage through OPPD’s computer-aided dispatch (CAD) software and then drive to the location to start their work. With data transmitted directly to their devices in real-time, troubleshooters can understand the situation even before they’re onsite, ultimately helping them restore power faster.

The semi-rugged design of the TOUGHBOOK 55 makes it ideal for withstanding the bumps and drops prone to fieldwork and challenging weather like rain or snow.

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Field personnel also appreciate the device’s screen size and brightness, which ensures optimal visibility in direct sunlight. And, the device’s backward compatibility allows seamless integration with existing hardware and software infrastructure, eliminating the need for cumbersome adaptors.

With multiple connectivity options, field personnel gained access to real-time geographic information system (GIS) data, facilitating remote asset inspections and expediting response times. Personnel could quickly pinpoint the location of a power outage and dispatch the closest repair crew. Rapid access to data also streamlined job navigation, with maps to the location of the next task sent directly to the device, so field personnel could easily transition between assignments.

OPPD found the TOUGHBOOK 55 devices fit harmoniously within their ecosystem, making the devices and operating system familiar and easy for OPPD’s IT team to set up and deploy, and for field personnel to use on day one. Thanks to the infrared webcam built into the TOUGHBOOK 55 devices, field personnel can log in using facial recognition technology, which eliminates the wasted time workers spent recalling and entering long passwords.

“Our shift to a digital utility company is not just about modernization; it’s a commitment to addressing our customers’ present needs while innovating for their future challenges. Through the integration of technology and a focus on customer-centric solutions, we are empowering our communities to thrive.” – Scott Marshall, Manager, Application Services at Omaha Public Power District

By choosing to implement TOUGHBOOK 55 devices, OPPD was able to meet field worker needs for productivity and flexibility, while advancing into a digitally-driven future for their customers and community.

