

Case study

## MOD BlackBerry

# Flexible working for the armed forces



Security concerns used to mean that Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Armed Forces personnel were unable to use a device that many of us today take for granted—a smartphone integrated with email.

But with MOD BlackBerry that's all changed. Already more than 3,400 people are benefiting from securely seeing their calendars, accessing emails, and viewing attachments, on the move through an always-on device.

For someone like Squadron Leader Steve Donnellan, it's changed his life, improving real time communications, increasing efficiency and providing a welcome boost to work life balance.

“Without question, using the MOD BlackBerry is a game changer for the Military Air Accident Investigation Branch (MilAAIB). The ability to access your Outlook contacts and DII emails whilst away from an office is invaluable. Although the BlackBerry's camera isn't the primary method for taking photographs to be used as evidence, it's a brilliant way to quickly record and share initial incident or accident images.”

Squadron Leader Steve Donnellan, Military Air Accidents Investigation Branch, Royal Air Force



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“I am delighted that after a comprehensive pilot and close working between each of the MOD and Industry teams, we are now able to offer a product that will enable a step change in our ability to support secure, flexible and truly mobile working anywhere in the world where there is a GSM mobile data signal”.

Lee Nicholls, Networks Fixed Deputy Head and DFTS Programme Manager, MOD Defence Equipment and Support ISS Networks

## The widespread availability of MOD BlackBerry helps the military stay in touch and boost efficiency when away from base

### Challenge

Defence communication has always demanded a powerful balance of security, capability, and innovation. BT provides the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD), its suppliers and Other Government Departments with a wide range of secure communications services through the Defence Fixed Telecommunications Service (DFTS) Contract that has been running since 1997.

National defence relies on swift and secure access to up-to-date information and key people, wherever they may be, so flexible working facilities feature strongly in DFTS Services. As well as the RESTRICTED LAN Interconnect (RLI) Service for desktop access to its RESTRICTED (Impact Level 3) accredited network, BT provides a Managed Mobile Service for the one-stop-shop for the provision and replacement of mobile phones for MOD personnel.

Smartphones such as the BlackBerry have become an essential business tool, enabling people to browse the web, see their calendar, access emails, and even open email attachments when away from the office. For the MOD, security issues had been a barrier to their widespread adoption.

ISS tasked BT and ATLAS, who are the organisation responsible for delivering secure information infrastructure services

for the MOD, to deliver a service that would enable MOD to meet CESG Impact Level 3 (IL3) security requirements, enabling the transmission and receipt of data at RESTRICTED level on a mobile device.

### Solution

Working with ATLAS, a BT project team developed a BlackBerry Service that would meet the required security standards. In developing the Service, now known as MOD BlackBerry, the team needed to carefully consider more than 5,000 different configuration parameters and security policies. BT-hosted BlackBerry Enterprise Servers (BES) interconnect with MOD Microsoft Exchange servers managed by ATLAS.

The service seamlessly synchronises a user's RESTRICTED email – including attachments, Microsoft Outlook calendar, and contacts – enabling easy and truly mobile working via the MOD BlackBerry smartphone from almost anywhere in the world where there is a GSM mobile data signal and a Vodafone roaming agreement with the in-country mobile operator. Although data can be transmitted and received at RESTRICTED level, voice calls and text messages are currently limited to UNCLASSIFIED level.

MOD BlackBerry equipment is available for order through an online catalogue. Once orders are approved, users receive

their fully-configured ready-to-activate MOD BlackBerry smartphone within five-days. A single point of contact helpdesk provides support, dealing with all fault reporting as well as handset replacement.

Should a MOD BlackBerry be lost or stolen the dedicated helpdesk can immediately lock the device and even remotely scrub all data from the device to prevent a security breach. A BT managed billing service gives MOD a centralised view of expenditure and usage, while billing applications enable drill-down to departmental or individual level.

### Value

Take-up has been strong, particularly among senior officers and civilian personnel, but rank is not the main criteria. Wing Commander Chris Edwards explains: “It's all about flexible working. If somebody can be more effective, more accessible, or more productive with a BlackBerry when they're out of the office or travelling to meetings, then it is available to them. MOD BlackBerry is a very cost effective option.”

The MOD BlackBerry is available for a fixed monthly fee, which includes all data charges plus unlimited texts and inclusive calls to UK fixed lines and mobiles. More than 3,400 devices are already in service and the network is currently dimensioned to handle 6,400 users, although this can be increased if necessary.

“MOD BlackBerry has made a huge difference to the way we work allowing us to keep up to date with daily tasks whilst travelling in the UK and overseas. It would be difficult to remain effective without it.”

Lieutenant Nicole Bassett, Navy Command Headquarters, Royal Navy



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“My MOD BlackBerry service has provided me with essential support to exercise command and control. I have insisted that my key staff and COs use these devices too. We have developed a culture of rapid passage of information directly to commanders when appropriate, regardless of whether they are sitting behind desks or not.”

**Brigadier Jonathan Cole, 11 Signal Brigade, Army**

User feedback has been very positive. For example, Air Vice-Marshal Lindsay J Irvine says of his MOD BlackBerry: “What I thought would be an important but largely desirable office tool has turned out to be essential. Its utility has been hugely aided by reliability. During a brief period when I could not use it due to an address change, I felt bereft. I doubt that I could be as effective in my

role in the future without such an effective and reliable communications aid.”

Chris Edwards adds: “Unlike a laptop the BlackBerry is effectively always on, so communication is far more immediate and you really can keep on top of dynamically changing situations in real time. That’s vital for many of the situations our people find themselves in.”

The MOD BlackBerry service is giving work life balance a boost too. Chris Edwards says: “I find the MOD BlackBerry extremely useful in helping me to utilise my time efficiently. I can check my calendar and email at any time, view important documents using the Documents To Go app, ensuring I stay in control of my ever increasing workload.”

“ I support Air Officer Commanding RAF No 22 (Training) Group and it’s essential that I’m able to access email and calendar at all times. The MOD BlackBerry is a superb solution. It’s easy to connect at a moment’s notice and it keeps me in touch wherever I am.”

**Flight Lieutenant Alicia Mason, No 22 Training Group Headquarters, RAF**



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