

Here's how it works

BULK GAS DELIVERY

A bulk LPG tank is a popular option for domestic gas users in rural, off-grid areas and certain types of business. For domestic users, LPG tanks can be discreetly placed above or below ground. Calor uses advanced telemetry system to remotely monitor the client's gas usage and alert both the back-office system and the client when the tank requires topping up. An advanced delivery notification is issued by the system to the customer so they are fully aware of delivery timescales.

For bulk deliveries, the TouchStar system provides a critical fleet management data flow between the driver, vehicle and office, similar to gas bottle delivery. When the driver starts the round, the driver receives details of the route and helpful additional information. This includes the exact location of the tank to be filled, not just the customer's address. The mobile device links to the tank's electronic meters to record opening levels and amount of gas delivered.

The level of the customer's tank after filling is also measured and recorded, with tank volumes left at a pre-agreed percentage capacity. On completion, 'quantity delivered' and signature capture data is sent back to Calor in real time.

Location of the truck is also available in real time, which brings additional safety and security advantages. GPS navigation assistance is also particularly useful as, for example, new drivers may not be overly familiar with the geographical areas within which they are operating. Again drivers can be prompted to perform additional tasks, not directly associated with the delivery process, such as site surveys.

SYSTEM BENEFITS

The benefits derived from the availability of critical data within both the bottled and bulk gas delivery systems include;

- A reduction in the administrative resources to establish the delivery schedule and route

information. Previously, the information flow between the driver and the dispatcher was handled by fax or telephone.

- Optimisation of the time spent during the delivery.
- Reduction of the mileage of the truck due to more efficient routing, leading to a reduction in fuel usage and carbon savings.

Big benefits have also been realised in the area of 'proof of delivery' and customer invoicing. Previously the process relied on manual delivery notes, which could be mislaid, now this is all automated with full audit trail.

The TouchStar solution allows the driver to print delivery notes on the spot. A customer's signature is simply captured on screen for proof of delivery purposes and a Proof Of Delivery document is printed instantly. There have been immediate benefits in the accuracy of data and the time saved in Calor's back office. Subsequently, if there are any discrepancies over what was delivered, an electronic version of the document can simply be raised on the system and automatically sent to the customer. Prior to the system's implementation, personnel needed to manually retrieve documents from a paper archive.



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The core TouchStar software systems, with periodic version updates, have underpinned the Calor operation since their introduction in 2003. In 2019 the company decided that it would implement a large-scale hardware upgrade. The decision was made to retain TouchStar as the sole hardware supplier.

Calor used TouchStar 'Kestrel' device, which offered an integral printer, across both bottled and bulk operations. The upgrade included careful consideration of operational differences and the decision was taken to upgrade to TouchStar 'Hawk' mobile devices with 'Blaster' printers in the bulk trucks. Vehicles delivering bottled products were again fitted with 'Hawks' but, this time, combined with Zebra mobile printers.

Adam Bolitho Supply Chain Project Manager for Calor, explains some of the principle reasons behind this decision:

"Calor were in the market to upgrade their outgoing Kestrel OBTC devices after an impressive 13 years in service. Calor required a hardware solution that was rugged, Atex approved and capable of operating in relatively extreme environments. The TouchStar Hawk device, with accompanying printer, was selected due to the simplicity of the upgrade path and safe in-vehicle installation. The Hawk device also provides a 7" anti glare screen, 800mhz - 1ghz processer and Windows CE operating system capable of running the 'Calor deman' workflow software.

The 'Calor deman' software is a workforce management application, developed specifically for

Calor by TouchStar, that allows distribution drivers to navigate, deliver, and process customer orders.

The deman software is fully operational on the Hawk tablet and custom development was undertaken in order to accommodate the use of a fixed in cab blaster printer for bulk drivers & a mobile, bluetooth enabled zebra printer for use and across Cylinder distribution.

The implementation of the Hawk solution was made easier through its existing use at Calor Ireland, as a result Calor GB had a reliable reference to help learn lessons and operate a seamless national rollout".

CONCLUSION

The final word on the success and impact of the TouchStar system again comes from **Adam Bolitho**:

"I have worked with a variety of hardware and workforce management software providers across my 8 years at Calor Gas, however none have provided the depth of knowledge and expertise on the successful integration of gas metering systems and auto-order reconciliation into Calor's ERP system.

The implementation of the Hawk devices, across both bulk and cylinder, has been extremely smooth and Calor have experienced the instant benefit of a modern, rugged, TouchStar-manufactured device running on a feature-rich software platform".

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