

CASE STUDY: Australian Wool Exchange

Spending hours on their feet at national wool auctions, auditors at the Australian Wool Exchange have found the perfect companion in Tegatech's Ultra Mobile PCs.

The Australian Wool Exchange is responsible for monitoring the quality of Australian wool, one of the country's most important exports. The AWE's team of auditors work at the country's three main wool auction centres in Fremantle, Melbourne and Sydney. Armed with a Viliv X70 Ultra Mobile PCs from Tegatech, the auditors work on the auction floor to inspect a sample of wool from each lot offered for sale.

While some wool characteristics can be measure in the lab, the auditors are required to quickly and accurately assess the wool's "non-measured characteristics" such as uniformity and how well the wool has been prepared. Portable yet powerful Ultra Mobile PCs are a valuable tool on the auction floor when compiling reports, says AWE wool services manager David Cother.

"Thanks to the Ultra Mobile PCs supplied by Tegatech, our auditors have the auction catalogue at their fingertips and can quickly get wool reports to interested bidders. It's a process that was previously done on paper, but the UMPCs have revolutionised the way our auditors work," Cother says.

"We've previously trialled PDAs, but the issue with PDAs is the lack of screen real estate. There's a lot of information on wool sale lot, about 50 data fields. It's just not possible to represent all of that on a PDA screen, so we needed something with a bigger screen size and adequate battery life which was still light enough for our auditors to carry for three or four hours at a stretch. Weight was the issue with the larger tablets, they were just too heavy to carry all the time, but the Ultra Mobile PCs are perfect for the job."

The Viliv X70 Ultra Mobile PCs feature a 7 inch touchscreen display but weights in at a mere 660gm. They run Windows 7 while under the bonnet lies a 1.33 GHz Intel processor with 1GB of RAM, 32GB of solid state storage, Bluetooth and WiFi plus optional GPS and mobile broadband.

"Working with a full-blown Windows system certainly makes the cost of development a lot cheaper, our previous experience with PDAs saw us always trying to squeeze things in and work around the limitations of the device. It was about compromises, whether it be screen size or programming," Cother says.

"Running Windows 7 out of the box on the UMPCs means we can just run whatever we need without those hassles. Windows 7 seems to have some good power management options and be very stable. We're also pleased with the size of the onscreen keyboard. The move to Windows 7 has been really positive, we haven't made the move to Windows 7 on th desktop yet so these UMPCs are our first taste of what it can do."

The Australian Wool Exchange is not the only group impressed with power and flexibility offered by Tegatech's Ultra Mobile PCs. After seeing the machines in action on the auction floor, at least 10 companies have approached Cother's team showing an interesting the technology.

"I think that says something for the solution Tegatech has helped us put together - it's obviously addressing some fairly fundamental needs in our industry. Those who are still using PDA are quite impressed when they see our Ultra Mobile PCs and the software we're running on them," Cother says.

"There's a lot of untapped potential here, as we're still working to establish good wireless connectivity on the auction floor. Our auditors are certainly looking forward to being online all the time, giving them access to email and real time messaging. Now we've found the right tool for the job in the UMPCs, and the right partner in Tegatech, we can see a lot of benefits for the future."

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