CASE STUDY
SharePoint Tablet App Improves Store Inspection Process

THE CLIENT
Hungry Howie’s Pizza & Subs, Inc. is one of the country’s largest pizza franchises, operating over 565 locations in 22 states nationwide.

THE CHALLENGE
Each Hungry Howie’s store location is inspected by four inspectors (reps). The process required them to manually complete a full store inspection form in Microsoft Excel. Manual entry led to undesirable variation and a lack of continuity between similar responses on each form.

In order to log store data into the inspection form, reps were required to carry around nine pound laptops from store-to-store. Reps needed both hands to operate the laptop entry form, which meant setting the laptop on food prep counters to complete the inspection. The heavy laptops regularly got food inside of them and were dropped on the ground on several occasions. Reps were also required to carry around mobile printers in order to print out documentation of the inspections for the store managers. The process was overly complicated, clunky, and inefficient.

THE SOLUTION
“We met with Interactive Business Systems (IBS) and explained our problem with some of our own thoughts on how we’d like to solve it,” said Dan McKay, IT Director at Hungry Howie’s. “They took our ideas into account, and then suggested some other options. They came up with some really slick tools.”

IBS developed a Microsoft SharePoint-based application for the iPad 2 with a stylus to give users a “pen and paper” feel. The mobility of a lightweight iPad (just under 1.5 pounds) allows reps to operate the app without setting the device down. Utilizing SharePoint, IBS integrated pre-populated fields and drop-down bars into the app to provide continuity in the form responses.

“The iPad is much easier for our inspection process than a computer,” said Sylvia Moore, Franchise Representative. “It’s so much more practical to simply touch and select. It makes the process much faster. With Excel, form responses varied between each inspection. Now it’s a selection of a few specific answers.” Reps can mark down notes alongside these standardized responses for more specificity. IBS also utilized the iPad’s built-in camera to allow reps to associate notes with pictures.

When the form is completed, it is automatically sent via email to the regional rep, the VP of Operations, the franchise owner, and others associated with the specific store. Each of these contacts are pre-populated and associated with the individual store, so no additional steps are required. Stores with fax machines are automatically sent completed forms so the store manager has a physical copy.

IBS also kept flexibility in mind when developing this application. Though Hungry Howie’s currently uses it for the iPad, it was written to work universally on Android, Windows or other mobile tablet devices.

TECHNOLOGY USED
• Sharepoint
• iOS
• Windows
• Android
OTHER BENEFITS

• **Inspection form loaded into cache:** If a cellular data connection is ever lost, all previously entered content is saved. For example, if an inspector walks into the freezer and loses connection, the form is saved. “This is one of the greatest things about this application,” said Dan McKay, IT Director.

• **Location services:** Geographic location, store management, store ownership and inspector information are all pre-populated by the application.

• **Time reporting:** The application logs what time the inspector begins filling out the form and when it has been completed to track how long each inspection takes.

• **Pre-population using a jQuery library:** When reps search for a store location they can simply enter a letter or word into an auto-complete field and all relevant entries are displayed. This auto-complete function is also used when reps select a report to view.

• **Admin-controlled options:** Through the use of SharePoint lists, admins are able to control specific responses for drop-down fields including options for: food quality and quantity, adding or removing items from the inspection, ranking the importance of each field.

THE RESULT

Hungry Howie’s store inspection process is now more intuitive and allows for more detailed reports. The process is more streamlined with the standard set of responses and prepopulated fields on the form.

Using an iPad in place of a cumbersome laptop has increased the efficiency of the process, both in terms of the length of the process, and in how much money is spent on upkeep for dated, frequently dropped computers. The automated fax-sending feature eliminated the need for inspectors to carry a mobile printer.

“It was a great idea to include the camera functionality,” McKay said. The inclusion of pictures allows more than one pair of eyes to ensure quality inspections. In fact, Hungry Howie’s has already benefitted from this new feature.

In order to create a pizza that is consistent between each store, the company has a set standard for oven temperature settings. With the assistance of the photos, the reps noticed a slight deviation in an oven before it was able to negatively affect the quality of the product.

IBS developed a close working relationship with Hungry Howie’s, and delivered an application that more than met their needs. “Working with IBS has been great,” McKay said. “Their working relationship was even better than expected...and I already thought highly of them.”

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Dan McKay, IT Director of Hungry Howie’s