Software developer uses large-format devices to promote secure group collaboration

Software development firm Black Marble Limited will incorporate Microsoft Surface Hub team collaboration devices into its solutions for public safety, application lifecycle management, and 3-D modeling. By making group collaboration auditable, Black Marble will enable teams to work together on sensitive information securely, opening up new markets for the company's solutions and services.

Black Marble Limited
www.blackmarble.com
30 employees
United Kingdom
Software development

Microsoft Surface Hub

Black Marble Limited was founded in 1997 to provide high-quality software development services. The company specializes in Microsoft technologies and delivers solutions across industries, from insurance to healthcare to public safety.

Business needs

Black Marble Limited is a software development consultancy based in West Yorkshire, England, that builds a wide range of custom solutions based on Microsoft technologies, including deployment and development for SharePoint Server, business process automation with BizTalk Server, and application lifecycle management consulting. The company has 10 Microsoft Partner Network competencies and four Microsoft Most Valuable Professionals on staff.

Black Marble uses its depth of expertise to develop solutions targeted at industries with complex and sophisticated needs, such as public safety, banking, and healthcare. To serve these high-stakes, highly regulated organizations, the company must integrate data governance and control into its applications. "Our customers want to be able to audit everything—if a spreadsheet is changed, they want to know who did it so they can investigate if necessary," says Robert Hogg, Managing Director at Black Marble Limited. However, when it comes to collaboration, security can't get in the way. "We need authentication to be quick. If it's slow, users will drop it like a hot potato."

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> **—Robert Hogg, Managing Director, Black Marble Limited**
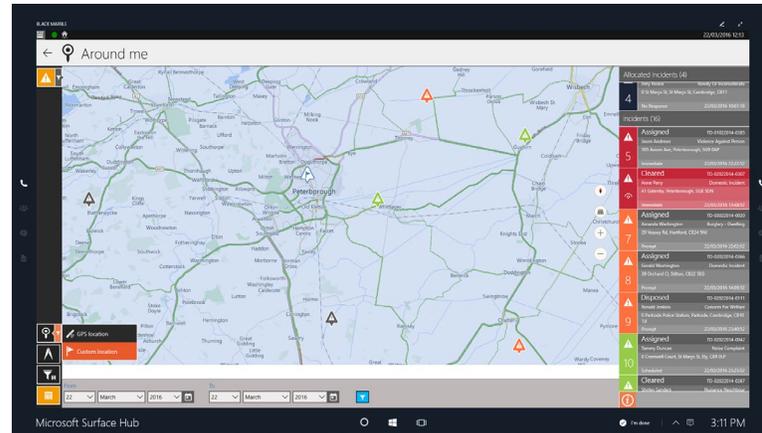
Microsoft Surface Hub

One of the most groundbreaking solutions developed by Black Marble is called tuServ, a mobile application that gives police officers near-real-time access to data from mobile devices and tablets. tuServ eliminates dependence on inefficient paper-based systems, resulting in major productivity gains and enabling police to spend more time interacting with citizens. "The next major frontier is to increase the productivity of commanding officers at headquarters," says Hogg.

Solution

To continue to offer its customers access to cutting-edge technology that will further increase their productivity, Black Marble began developing solutions based on Microsoft Surface Hub. Hogg believes that the devices will resonate with customers because Surface Hub combines key technologies into a single solution. "Normally, we would have to use a videoconferencing solution, or a digital whiteboard solution, or invest quite a lot more money to do a bit of both," says Hogg. "Surface Hub is one screen that people can use to do all of those things."

The devices are both simple and high-quality, says Hogg. "All the bits are clever—but not so clever they won't work," he says. "The device runs Windows 10, and there's a good-quality screen, fast processing, digital inking, and directional microphones and video." Surface Hub also provides a built-in digital whiteboard and content sharing using Microsoft OneNote and videoconferencing with Skype for Business. "We think the primary benefit is that users have more capable meeting rooms that allow for data capture," says Hogg. "It's simply better collaboration, and in most organizations, that will save money."

However, the feature that excites Hogg most is the advanced digital inking, especially the fact that the device's pens can be authenticated to a user's corporate identity. This means that digital ink can be audited, which is well-suited to the security and regulatory needs of many Black Marble customers. "We genuinely feel that digital inking is one of the best features of Surface Hub. With an authenticated pen, a user can move between devices and the

audit trail will work. If something goes wrong, auditors will know who did that work. That oversight brings a lot of comfort to our customers."

Because the devices use the Windows 10 operating system, Black Marble will be able to develop applications for Surface Hub using the team's existing skills. Those applications will work across other devices such as Windows tablets and PCs, and will also work seamlessly with solutions such as Microsoft SharePoint Server, SharePoint Online, and Microsoft Azure. "If you build a Windows 10 application, it should just work," says Hogg.

Microsoft Surface Hub

Benefits

Because workers can use Surface Hub to work more securely, companies will be able to grant them access to data that they need to do their work. "Customers can use Surface Hub to access and manipulate data from different parts of their organizations while remaining compliant with industry regulations," says Hogg. This makes it possible for the highly regulated organizations that are a key market for Black Marble to adopt ink-based collaboration on business-critical data. Black Marble is currently focusing on developing three applications for Surface Hub, enabling the company to deliver a richer portfolio of collaboration solutions across its customer base.

Giving public safety customers more value for their investments

Bringing the tuServ solution to Surface Hub will improve the ability of commanding officers to optimize resources and respond to emerging incidents. They will be able to see the locations of other officers and incidents and redirect resources quickly. Images and video coming back from the scene can be annotated and shared to make faster decisions. "With tuServ, our public safety customers can use Surface Hub to gain a collaborative view of everything that's happening in a police force, while retaining complete authentication and high security every step of the way." This will result in significant productivity increases at police headquarters, says Hogg, helping to increase the market penetration of tuServ. "tuServ already saves police on the street hours per shift. I think it will deliver the same level of results for command staff when used on Surface Hub."

Microsoft Surface Hub

Enhancing the application lifecycle

Black Marble also offers application lifecycle development consulting, particularly for large banks. "Because we're a development shop, we have a natural interest in tooling issues—things like Kanban boards," says Hogg. (Kanban boards are a workflow visualization tool that development teams can use to manage open items.) Viewing and interacting with Kanban boards on Surface Hub will be a more productive experience for customers, says Hogg, while providing tracking capabilities that are required for managing complex development efforts and meeting regulatory requirements. Offering group collaboration solutions will make the company's application lifecycle management solutions more attractive to customers.

Enabling new 3-D modeling approaches

The third area in which Black Marble is developing solutions for Surface Hub is 3-D modeling, particularly for the design of tooling for injection molding. This will position Black Marble as a leader in the increasingly collaboration-focused engineering and design market sectors. "Because of the large screen size, you can draw and erase right on the digital model of a mold," says Hogg. "And you know what? We can track every change."

Microsoft Surface Hub Software Developer Program

Unlock the power of the group for you or your customers by developing innovative, immersive applications that take full advantage of the unique technical capabilities of Surface Hub.

For more information about the Microsoft Surface Hub Developer Program, go to: www.microsoft.com/surfacehub

Microsoft Surface Hub