

FIELD INTELLIGENCE



PINESOFT CREATES A SMART SOLUTION FOR UNMANNED DELIVERIES.

When small, high-value, mission critical parts have to be delivered, by a specified time, to field-based engineers all over the country, they usually get there due to a Pinesoft system.

It's an 'intelligent' drop-box system which Pinesoft created for Business Direct.

It offers real-time traceability via GPRS, provides extensive management reporting and interfaces to existing client systems. It functions exclusively through software-driven technology, combined with ATM access techniques, and has substantially increased profitability both for Business Direct and its clients.



In 2001, Business Direct decided to channel its energies into creating an unmanned delivery system so that it could offer a genuine competitive edge in a crowded market. The traditional courier market was bursting with operators offering virtually identical service propositions in return for low margins. Business Direct asked Pinesoft to help.



A totally new business model designed from scratch, including the central software, software for the exchanges (the locker locations), scanning and reporting software and, most importantly, the ability to integrate, seamlessly, the other business models as the system evolves and expands.

The challenge; throw away the keys.

The unmanned drop-box system (a network of field-based, automated delivery lockers) had to offer secure access for each client, real-time traceability, interfaces with existing client systems, and provide bespoke management reporting.

The Pinesoft solution was the 'intelligent' box: a delivery locker that functions exclusively through software-driven technology, as opposed to the traditional system of delivery lockers which required a lock and key.



Hard facts about SoftLocker

The system which Pinesoft designed was christened 'SoftLocker' due to its software reliance. ATM key-card technology was the start point for development of the locker opening system. Pinesoft designed a 'smart' system around it, offering transparency of information through client interfaces for GPRS real-time traceability.

As well as deliveries, the system can accept returns and be used for 'Just-In-Time' inventory management or forward stock-holding. Other benefits include:

- Management Reporting (engineer productivity, for example).
- Pre-emptive tracking; this can be undertaken by an automated software interface for IT systems, or a human interface, via the internet, and can be either ad hoc or timed, some clients require 15-minute updates throughout the day.
- Dynamic inbound deliveries and outbound returns (field personnel can receive or deliver wherever suits them best.)
- Over 250 built-in permissions, enabling clients to customise whatever authority procedures they wish.

Pinesoft also provides 24/7 support and maintenance for all Business Direct's hardware and systems infrastructure. Pinesoft has the ability to remotely connect to any of the locker locations - over 4,000 intelligent boxes - for diagnostics and fault-finding. Any problem can be fixed in seconds.

Basically Pinesoft is the IT department of Business Direct.

'SoftLocker' went live in 2004. Since then Business Direct's turnover has grown from £5.5 m to £16.0 m. The company believes that Pinesoft and the solution it provided has been a major contributor to this growth.



Established in 1994, Pinesoft is a software development company which specialises in the rapid application development of complex transactional systems for both large global organisations and SMEs, primarily in the logistics and distribution sector.

Through expert use of object-oriented design methods they ensure that their bespoke solutions can always be integrated with a client's ongoing business needs.



"With this system in place all our revenue goes straight to the bottom line. Pinesoft created the systems which enabled us to take the UK's only 100 percent intelligent drop-box network to market, and enhance our profitability astronomically. The day the SoftLocker system became operational was the day from which we no longer required any incremental expenditure to generate incremental profit."



**Timothy Houston,
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smart IT solutions

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