From insight to income: How Vipond leveraged inspection data for revenue growth

Fire protection and safety solutions provider streamlines data consolidation while improving compliance and service revenue

- 10K hours saved per year from streamlined admin work
- Reduced technician travel
- Continuity of knowledge and expertise across organization
- Increased revenue opportunities from service data

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Since 1945, Vipond has been a leading fire protection contractor, specializing in the design, engineering, installation, testing, inspecting, and servicing of all types of fire protection, life safety and security systems.

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The compounding costs of labor-intensive paperwork

For its inspections, Vipond struggled with a patchwork of documentation mechanisms. Most of the challenges it encountered related to its back-office processes. The electrical side of the business relied on a hybrid of analog and digital tools — a combination of paper and Excel — while its mechanical side was documented using a digital platform. As the company managed its data, it had to parse through all of these information streams and consolidate them into one coherent record. With up to 20,000 form submissions every year, integrating these data sources entailed multiple steps, from manually digitizing paper records into Excel and then PDFs to making sense of the inconsistent methods that each of Vipond's 40 branches across Canada employed for its recordkeeping. This resulted in thousands of labor hours needing to be dedicated to administration.

"For just one type of report, we were seeing 6,500 submissions per year. At 15 minutes each, that works out to about 4,000 hours. Across five or so other types of reports, that goes up to 20,000 submissions every year. In Winnipeg, which is one of our lighter branches, that translated to half a full-time job allocated to paperwork. Some branches require multiple roles

dealing with the administrative burden resulting from this system," Calvin Hunter, Project Manager, recounted.

Compliance was another critical consideration, especially when it came to the accuracy of the data reflected in those reports. Pencil whipping, or signing off on work without verifying the accuracy of a document, is a practice that can pose significant risk as a result of rushing through paperwork. "Paper is very easy to deal with — when you're not doing your job properly, like when you just get a sheet of paper with one long pencil line down the right side that says everything's okay. From our perspective as a company, compliance risk is an issue. Obviously, even if no one's calling us on it, we want to make sure we're doing our job," Calvin explained.

Vipond also recognized the opportunity cost of not having accurate inspection data to support other services offered by the company, such as service and deficiency work. "Reports affect our internal processes. A lot of our service work is generated from those inspections that we do. If the information on our inspection report is inaccurate, then it's hard to estimate the service work properly," he added.

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A standardized and consolidated approach to field service admin

When Calvin joined the Winnipeg office, he knew he needed a solution when he saw five-foot-high piles of paperwork being processed manually and costing the branch 20 hours a week. Available solutions were already few and far between, yet none offered what TrueContext did, whether it was the ability to handle the complexity of inspection workflows or the stringent compliance measures that regulators required.

Vipond made the decision to deploy TrueContext locally, with Calvin citing its no-code functionality for building forms, as well as its dispatch API integration and custom document generation feature. These were the vital components of the process that he had in mind for Winnipeg. Dispatch API was particularly important. "We don't fill our forms out from scratch. Every time we go do an inspection, we re-dispatch the data from the last inspection. It wouldn't be possible for us to redo the whole form every time — there's just too much data entry," he noted.

Given its success, the TrueContext deployment was eventually rolled out in Vipond's mechanical division and then across the company's national operations in major cities in Canada. Used by anywhere from 600 to 1,000 field workers, TrueContext delivered consistency in inspection workflow and documentation methods and improved the quality of data collected on the job.

Vipond also expanded TrueContext beyond the initial use case, covering additional functions such as site readiness for installations. Inspections, however, remain the primary area where the platform plays the most important role.

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Leveraging data for revenue possibilities

As for quantifying the ROI of Vipond's TrueContext deployment, Calvin points to the immediate cost savings from massive reductions in administrative burden. With tens of thousands of inspections documented in a single year, cutting administration time from 15 to 20 minutes per report down one or two minutes represents up to 10,000 hours saved just in inspections alone. The back office has eliminated much of its previous system of digitizing data from paper and consolidating it into a single source of truth for the organization.

For field technicians, the benefit of a truly mobile platform has been a lot more pronounced. They no longer need to waste hours traveling to the office to submit last week's forms and collect the current week's paperwork. The conditional logic-powered workflows guide them on the job, from ensuring continuity of knowledge between technicians, delivering

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step-by-step guidance, and mandating certain data to be collected to triggering specific tasks based on user input, such as when parts need to be replaced. "You can tell the technicians to do certain things, but they sometimes forget. They're thinking of a million things — just having that guardrail within the app is a huge improvement," Calvin said.

As TrueContext was being implemented, there was also a concurrent, corporation-wide push across Vipond to develop its service revenue stream. "The purpose of inspections is to generate high-margin work, like service or deficiency jobs, predicated on those inspections. The platform has enabled us to take that to the next level, with photos and other types of information included in the data record," Calvin noted. The vast improvement in data quality and velocity across inspections played a part in the company's successful pivot.

Looking ahead, Calvin is planning a second phase in Vipond's TrueContext deployment to make significant improvements to the technician and customer experience. As a top priority, he and his time are looking at developing a self-serve portal, which will allow customers to download reports and view relevant information. For the frontline, he's looking to streamline the experience further, making sure that the app doesn't get in the way of the work. With more and more TrueContext features being released every quarter, Calvin is also looking forward to leveraging them to explore and realize new possibilities for the business.

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