

CASE STUDY: BUILDINGREPORTS.COM

"The volume of data collected in the field is staggering, so speed and usability are essential features for mobile handheld devices."

Industry:	Field Service
Application:	Building Inspection/Equipment Maintenance
Challenge:	Efficient and secure building safety compliance inspections
Solution:	BuildingReports.com software and Web-based solution and Janam XP20W rugged wireless handhelds

Safeguarding the Devices that Protect Us

Small buildings may have two or three. A hospital may have hundreds. Some manufacturing plants may have up to 4,000. And there's close to 460 different types. Smoke detectors, emergency lighting, defibrillators, sprinkler systems and pull stations are just a few of the life safety systems and devices that must be regularly tested to meet federal and local building code regulations. Used primarily by field inspectors, BuildingReports' web-based inspection reporting system ensures that safeguarding these devices is conducted efficiently with verifiable compliance.

Inspectors typically do two to three inspections per week and sometimes begin at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. Before an inspection, field inspectors will download the building specifications from BuildingReports' web-based application to access pertinent information like the address, contact information and special instructions. At the facility, the inspection process typically involves two people. While the inspector walks through the building, from floor to floor and device to device another person is stationed at the control panel to watch for alerts.

Equipped with a Janam XP20 mobile device running BuildingReports' web-based application, the inspector scans in the bar code or enters a serial number for each device. A record appears on the bright-white monochrome screen of the Janam XP20. Every two to three minutes, a new device is scanned, adding up to hundreds or thousands of records. At the end of the day, built-in wireless capabilities enable inspectors to easily send updated information back to the main server. BuildingReports then prepares a comprehensive report for the owner/facility manager. Specifics include why a particular device needs replacement and lists the applicable fire code, along with any other relevant details.

Taking the Lead with Speed

Although BuildingReports' application runs on other operating systems, there is a strong preference for Palm OS®-based devices. According to Jason Kronz, "No matter how fast the device's processor is, a sluggish operating system is going to slow everything down. Put all the different systems side-by-side and Palm OS wins in two of the most critical areas: battery life and speed."

Top five priorities » »

"The Janam XP20 is the fastest device in our inventory. Of all the devices we've evaluated, it's probably the most usable device on the market."



Janam XP20 (numeric keypad style) running BuildingReports' web-based building inspection application.

Because superior performance is so crucial in every aspect of the life safety industry, BuildingReports carefully selects the mobile devices that run their application. Choosing a new handheld involves an assessment based on multiple criteria, and Jason Kronz highlights his top five priorities.

#1 – Scanning: Speed and accuracy

During an inspection, the bar codes on hundreds of devices must be read quickly and accurately, usually from a distance of about 10-12 inches and in difficult working conditions. The Janam XP20 delivers fast, accurate data capture of serial numbers and bar codes, including Code 39 and other symbologies.

#2 – Battery life: Measured in days, not hours

For the average inspection, at least two days of battery life is required. When put to the test in day-to-day usage, the Janam XP20 is exceeding BuildingReports' expectations with a battery life that often lasts for a full week of inspections.

#3 – Usability: Bright or "outrageously" bright

BuildingReports has stringent requirements for usability, and the Janam XP20 received its highest marks in this area. The handheld's 266MHz processor provides ample speed and versatility for BuildingReports' application. But design is equally important. Even in the darkest mechanical rooms, the Janam XP20 has an "outrageously" bright screen and backlit keypad to make it easier to see in low light conditions.

#4: Durability: Rugged for tough working conditions

Any device used in a light industrial environment must be able to withstand being dropped to the floor. The Janam XP20 meets all standards for multiple 4-foot (1.2m) drops to concrete – on all sides – across the full temperature range.

#5: Price: Important, but not everything

For BuildingReports', price is always a consideration, but it's not always the sole deciding factor. "The Janam XP20 came in at a reasonable price point, but key features like the user interface, speed and battery life all weighed more heavily in our decision," said Kronz.

Creating a Win-Win in the Life Safety Industry

"Overall, the Janam XP20 scored high marks in all five categories," said Kronz. The real win-win is when customers are satisfied and inspectors are productive. Most building owners, facility managers, service companies and fire officials want a top performing handheld that's fast and accurate with data collection. And other key stakeholders – inspectors – have equal clout in the decision-making process and expect high standards of mobility and usability. Janam's performance and quality shows in other ways too. Currently, sales of Janam XP20 devices have quickly outpaced its closest competitor with BuildingReports' customers.

Why Speed Matters

The fast processor, combined with the speed of Palm OS, makes the XP20 very usable. Intensive daily data collection means that the Janam device is turned on every couple of minutes during the day. Battery life is also critical, and the XP20 battery often lasts up to a full week. Inspectors equipped with lesser devices may lose valuable time to recharge the battery during the workday.