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Transforming retail with rugged technology

The Co-op tells us why Samsung rugged tablets have given its stores a big appetite for mobile technology.



The Co-op is the UK's original food retailer—but thanks to its new rugged mobile devices, its stores are anything but dated.

It all started in 2018, when the business decided to 'go mobile' and digitally transform their operations.

For a retailer that still relied on many traditional technologies, it was a bold step. So, now they've had a taste of mobile, what's the verdict? Has it proved to be the best thing since sliced bread?





Old shops, new tricks

Andy Halkyard is the Co-op's Mobile Device Technical Lead. He's responsible for managing the business' fleet of around 15,000 mobile devices and making sure they deliver value in store and across the wider business.



"We wanted to try a new way of working, to save time for our colleagues by reducing the time they had to spend on smaller tasks", explains Andy.

By doing so, they hoped to relieve much of their employees' administrative burden. Because, as every business knows, the small things soon add up.

The team initially started with Samsung's entry-level devices, to prove the use case for the business.

Then, as the investment paid off and the possibilities grew, they progressed to Samsung's top-of-the-range rugged devices: the Samsung Tab Active Pro Enterprise Edition—part of a complete suite of mobile technology, devices and services specifically designed for business.

These were perfect for use in stores, as with anti-drop protection and IP68 water and dust resistance, they're built to survive all the bumps, spills and scrapes of the shop floor. Being a rugged design, the devices need to be fixed or replaced less frequently, which means they also offer better total cost of ownership. As Andy says, they've definitely proved their worth and are seen as offering real future potential for the chain. **"They have proved that mobility devices do work for stores".**



For starters, the tablets have helped the Co-op digitise many of its in-store processes—making them easier and faster. What's more, they've also transformed the way store managers work.

Thanks to their rugged tablets, managers are no longer confined to a PC in a back office to do their day-to-day tasks—they can stay in the heart of the store. **"They can basically walk around the shop and do everything they used to be able to do at a workstation,"** says Andy. That can be anything from checking stock levels and deliveries, to scheduling shifts and logging facilities issues. This means they're able to maintain an active presence with colleagues and ensure they're in the right place at the right time to deal with any issues.





Something for every appetite

The rugged devices have been welcomed by the rest of the in-store teams for training, connecting with HR and more.



"It's about empowering our colleagues to do more things with that store device," says Andy. "It's a shared-use device, designed for every colleague." Staff can access emails, websites, the intranet and specially built portals like the 'How to' portal, which provides quick answers to issues, such as processing unfamiliar payment methods.

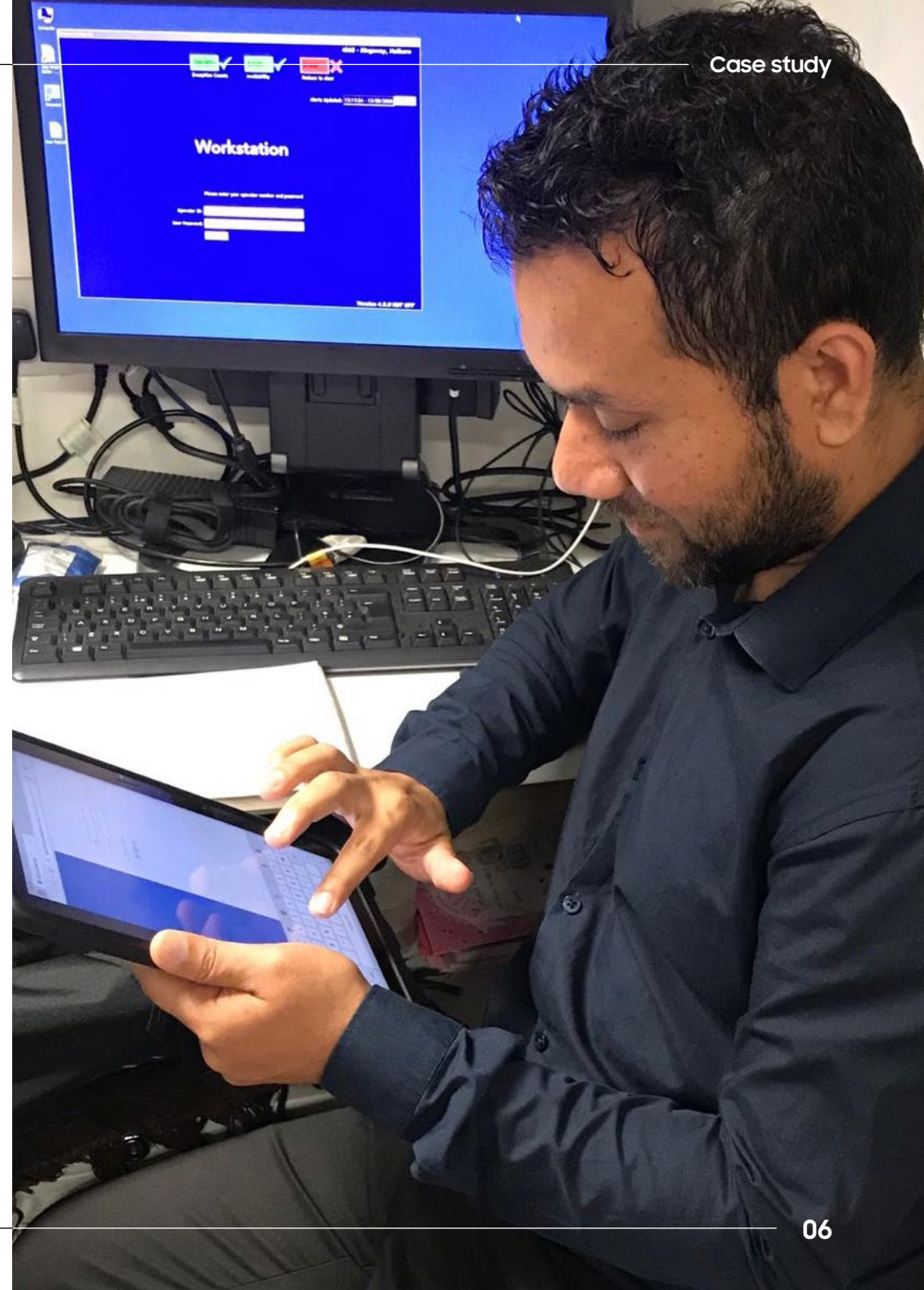
Stores are also utilising popular apps, like Yammer—an internal networking and collaboration tool. They use it to share display ideas or campaigns with other stores. Stores say it's really helped to strengthen the sense of community and bring them together—even when they're miles apart. Plus, with store managers and area managers communicating better, they're more agile to respond quickly to regular operational changes.

Added value

It wasn't just the Tab Active Pro's impressive features that attracted the Co-op to the rugged devices—they were also won over by Samsung's attractive Enterprise Edition offering.

It's a package of services and technology that has been designed to help reduce the time, money and effort IT teams are increasingly spending on managing and securing their mobile fleets.

Each Enterprise Edition tablet comes with three years' enhanced support and four years of security updates. Plus, Co-op were provided with dedicated training and support on hand to familiarise staff with the devices.





They also benefited from using Knox Suite—Knox is Samsung’s defence-grade security solutions that helped the Co-op remotely secure, deploy and manage their mobile devices. They were able to configure the tablets in bulk, setting them up with all the right profiles, settings, restrictions and apps, before issuing them to colleagues.



“We’re pretty much sending them out in the post, still unboxed, and the stores open them up. All they have to do is connect to the internet and the robots do the rest. It’s great.” With everything automated, set-up is fast and easy—even for those who are less tech-savvy.

As Andy explains, that’s a huge business benefit.

“We’ve probably saved a fortune by not having a warehouse full of devices, being slowly built by humans. We can now empower the stores to do it themselves.”

A recipe for success

The devices have certainly proved their worth across the stores, but how have they changed things behind the scenes for the Co-op team?

Well, one benefit is that they can now access a whole new world of analytics and get a complete view of how everybody is using their devices.



"I can see exactly what buttons they are pressing," explains Andy. **"On a normal day, there are people carrying out the management tasks, checking their emails, viewing supplier portals for deliveries, checking our delivery portal to see what the next wagon is coming along with."**





By seeing which apps and functions are being used—and how—the Co-op team can make smarter decisions about how to develop those features in future. They see the tablets as a “digital platform” which the Co-op can keep building on. They can add new apps to improve efficiency further and—thanks to their dedicated in-house development team—they can even design their own. It’s the perfect springboard for innovation.



Another hidden benefit is that there’s no training needed to get people using the devices. **“It’s just 24 buttons, all self-explanatory with pictures for those that don’t want to read.”**

Managing the security is straightforward too, as all the devices come with defence-grade security and four years of firmware updates.

A taste for technology

With a new fleet of Tab Active Pros in place, the Co-op team are excited about what's next for the business.

Moving away from legacy PCs, enables colleagues to work with the same functionality on mobile devices. The team has their sights set on Samsung DeX—a unique feature which allows users to work with a PC-like experience on their tablet either via Wi-Fi or with a cable. They see the future of collaboration in features like DeX. What stands out for them are the capabilities that enable people to choose how they work and ultimately increase productivity.

The team's ambitions will no doubt improve the Co-op's investment even further. But, for now, they have already achieved exactly what they set out to do.

The whole point of the tablet was off the back of a 'more efficiency' initiative to reduce costs. By helping stores save time throughout each day, the Co-op team have helped to deliver bigger efficiencies across the business.



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Co-op use the following Samsung devices
Galaxy Tab Active Pro **Enterprise Edition**

**See how Samsung Enterprise Edition can help free your
workforce at samsung.com/uk/business/enterprise-edition**