

## Case Study: Socket Mobile, Inc.

### Twice the Productivity with NO Additional Support / RMA Costs

#### *Client Requirements:*

Headquartered in Newark California, Socket Mobile, Inc. ([www.socketmobile.com](http://www.socketmobile.com)), makes mobility computing and productivity work for its clientele. The company is a one-stop supplier of mobile computing hardware systems, offering a handheld mobile computer specifically designed for business mobility use and an extensive portfolio of essential mobile data collection and networking peripherals that enable mobile automation and productivity increases. The company also offers OEM solutions.

Prior to the introduction of FrontLines AfterSales Support, Socket had two separate processes for handling support and RMA issues. Support issues were handled by a knowledge base (FAQ) support software and returns were handled through an internally developed Microsoft Access database system. Escalation from a service issue to a RMA was labor intensive and there were insufficient controls in place to ensure a consistently effective client experience with regards to the handling of their returns. Socket with its significant market penetration within its industry was dealing in a high volume of both support and RMA issues.

With regards to both Customer Support & RMA management, the areas which they were looking to enhance were:

- 1) The creation of a common database for both Customer Support and RMA related issues,
- 2) Reduction in RMA turnaround times and improved accountability,
- 3) Reduction in Customer Support phone calls,
- 4) Real time tracking, analysis and reporting ability,
- 5) A less manual, resource intensive, escalation from a customer support issue to RMA creation,
- 6) Communications and workflow improvements throughout the lifecycle of Support/RMA issues,
- 7) Improved handling of multiple unit returns under one RMA number,
- 8) Ability to do automated email RMA Status updates to customers,
- 9) Less resource intensive repair quoting system,
- 10) Ability to manage and support remote repair sites,
- 11) Improvement in both the overall post sale client experience & specifically increase customer satisfaction with regards returns handling &
- 12) Partner with an industry expert with widely used tools and not have to develop the tools internally.

#### *The Before Picture:*

Socket Mobile was unhappy with the separation between customer support and their return handling services and they were having difficulty finding a cost effective solution that provided both features. The software they were using for support, while having the potential to expand to returns management, was neither affordable nor flexible enough to be able to either cost effectively or properly process their returns.

The solution they required needed to have easy escalation from support to returns management issues. It needed real time reporting and analysis. They also, required a less manual system with the ability to process support issues and RMAs both efficiently and effectively. The system needed to be highly configurable, as well as, adaptable to changing support and RMA conditions without the necessity of extensive future custom programming. Above all the solution must provide a quick ROI (Return on Investment).

#### *The After Picture with FrontLines AfterSales Support:*

After reviewing the custom programming of a returns management module into Socket's existing support system, it was found to be too expensive with the finished solution not being flexible enough to fully meet their return managing requirements. Adapting their existing system, would also promise more follow up, and costly, custom programming, further diminishing any future return on investment. What was needed was a highly configurable system adaptable to Socket's Support / RMA needs, one which did not require custom programming experience to set up. After extensive executive review, it was determined the unique after sales support system by FrontLines was ideally suited to meet their needs.

Internally, there was some reluctance among the client services team to abandon their customer support solution in favor of an integrated support / RMA one. There is a common, and rather costly, disconnect in many manufacturing companies between customer support and their return handling services. Customer support is typically a one to one

relationship between the client and the support person. Returns, on the other hand, are a one to many relationship between the client and the entire return handling process. Effectively bridging these 2 systems is of key importance.

With excellent support and returns management, there is the potential to create the strongest bonds with your clients and, in lean times, when sales are scarce, both the delivering and extracting of value from your existing client base is mission critical to an organization's viability.

The executives of Socket Mobile realized the benefits which could be derived from an integrated support / return solution and worked closely with FrontLines to ensure their smooth transition into the FrontLines system.

The follow up results of Socket's use FrontLines have been excellent and are outlined below:

- 1) Twice as productive in handling RMA issues (with NO additional support costs),
- 2) Turnaround times on RMAs halved,
- 3) Improved RMA accountability within Frontlines has lead to a 3-fold benefit:
  - a) Easier to find and fix RMA roadblocks,
  - b) More focused effective training now occurs within a rigorously defined RMA processes, &
  - c) Both staff efficiency and morale have significantly improved.
- 4) Increased client awareness and communications (automated emails and on-line status reporting) have resulted in highly positive customer feedback with regards to service satisfaction (even more so with international clientele),
- 5) The time involved between RMA repair quotes and client acceptance has been reduced by 10% to 15%,
- 6) Discrepancy reporting on items sent as compared to items received has improved RMA inventory accuracy,
- 7) The centralization of Support/RMA data has enabled a more timely reporting capability including automated reports to both support and RMA stakeholders as part of the configured workflow,
- 8) Easy escalation of Service issues into the RMA process,
- 9) Quickly established ROI (Return on Investment),
- 10) Provision of the ability to have the FrontLines solution further modified to improve support/RMA services. Will be introducing shortly, the ability of customers to submit RMAs directly, which should reduce Customer Support calls by at least 50%.

The above results while impressive represent only a portion of the benefits Socket Mobile is poised to achieve with the FrontLines After Sales Support solution. With its ease of configurability, the Socket team is expanding the system to; increase its value to their distributors, improve & better monitor return handling within their outsourced repair centers, expand and fine tune measurement of customer satisfaction levels, and gain greater revenue from after sales services to name but a few...

### ***Summary:***

The first step in improving after sales support is to realize the gap in services between, customer support and returns management, needs to effectively bridged for your organization to gain true value from its post sale services. The executives at Socket Mobile realized this and with the introduction of FrontLines are now reaping the benefits.

They also realized the danger there was in a heavy investment in an after sales solution with only a long term ROI forecast and no guarantee of success. Similar CRM type implementations have oft been reported with rather scary 80% failure rates. They felt the 'best' solution, from their point of view, would be one which could be both cost effectively implemented and configured while delivering its ROI very quickly and at a reduced risk, all of which they have achieved with the introduction of FrontLines After Sales Support.

Now, with times as tight as they have been in 2008 and 2009, large expenditures without a quick return on investment are proving to be debilitating, and in some cases lethal, to the viability of manufacturing organizations and the foresight shown by Socket Mobile in this regard has left their organization well positioned to flourish in these tighter markets and have a greater ability to take advantage of the eventual upswing in the economy.

In an examination of Socket Mobile's case study, and the [case studies](#) of other companies successfully utilizing FrontLines solutions, it can be seen how, the both low risk and cost of FrontLines solutions provides our clients a rapid ROI and a much greater level of customer satisfaction.

If your organization is looking to cost effectively, perfect its support / RMA management, feel free to give FrontLines a look, and we will be more than happy to provide a [free online demonstration](#).

For more information about this [case study and other case studies](#) or to arrange a time for an online demonstration please email Mark Taylor, Director of Business Development at [mark@frontlines247.com](mailto:mark@frontlines247.com).