

Cityfleet

We've all been there. The cab firm says the taxi will be there at 7.30 and at 7.45 you're still waiting. By 8 o'clock anxiety has turned to anger and an evening out gets off on entirely the wrong foot because of the failure that gives cab companies a bad name – keeping their promise to arrive on time.

Can it ever change? Thankfully, the answer is yes.

A pioneering pilot scheme launched in Edinburgh by CityFleet – a new venture funded by DelGro Singapore and CCN Australia who own the largest taxi fleet in Europe ComCab plc - means ordering a taxi by phone will be transformed.

In a nutshell, it will mean a faster and more efficient service for the customer is a giant stride towards keeping that all-important promise of a cab arriving on time.

The linchpin of this new service is a £1 million call centre at Musselburgh. Here advanced calling line identity (CLI) technology will pull up customer details and history on a screen when an incoming call is received, allowing operators to personalise their responses to the caller. Taxis are then dispatched to the appropriate destinations and, on arrival, a confirmation message is automatically sent back to the Musselburgh centre. This in turn triggers an operator call to notify the particular customer that the vehicle has arrived.

This technological breakthrough was achieved with CityFleet working in partnership with THUS plc, one of the UK's leading providers of voice, data, internet and contact centre services. As well as supplying these high-speed voice and data links - which are basically all the telephone lines into the building - THUS is also transferring the former CityFleet BT freephone 0800 number onto its own network, and in the future implementing a nationwide 0845 local call number for Computer Cab. If the 0845 number is dialled in Glasgow, for example, origination information is flagged in the call centre and a local taxi dispatched in Glasgow. If the same number is dialled in Liverpool, a local taxi is similarly dispatched in Liverpool. And so on, nationwide.

Implementing the CityFleet system involved the integration in the call centre of highly specialised hardware and software systems supplied by Australian based taxi dispatch supplier, Sigtec. “The customer was really going into very complex territory from a technical and operational point of view,” says Iain Edgar, THUS account manager. “But working with CityFleet from the outset, and developing the system together enabled us to fully understand the fundamentals of their business and deliver this innovative solution.”

It is a system that will pay handsome dividends for City Fleet’s customers.

Paul Banks, General Manager of CityFleet Networks Edinburgh Bureau, said: “ This new system involves some tremendous technology but most importantly the customers will get a better deal.

“It means that the cab nearest to them will be sent to the pick-up point. We will be able to give a much more accurate time of arrival and this should ease so much of the frustration that customers can encounter from time to time.”

CityFleet decided to use THUS to supply the communications because of the company’s ability to provide a tailor-made solution for the business – with a personal touch.

Mr Banks said: “We’ve dealt with other telecoms companies and you can spend two days just discovering you’re not talking to the right person. With THUS I have an account manager who is my first port of call. I know who I’m dealing with and that makes all the difference. “We liked the fact that THUS is a Scottish company and they were able to give us exactly what we wanted.”

CityFleet plans to expand its service throughout the UK.

Mr Banks said: “This means we will be waving goodbye to the old ways and it gives customers the best service available.”