



BlackBerry Revolutionizes Workplace for One of Japan's Foremost **Trading Companies** by Deploying Customized Apps Developed on Microsoft Xamarin

At a Glance



Industry Trading
Employees 4,364
Location Japan
Products BlackBerry®
Enterprise Mobility Suite -
Application Edition,
BlackBerry® UEM,
BlackBerry® Work,
BlackBerry® Dynamics
www.itochu.co.jp/

One of Japan's oldest trading companies, ITOCHU Corporation operates in several dozen countries and multiple major industries. It's known for its innovative approach to revolutionizing the workplace and promoting employee health, and has a reputation for excellence across verticals. As part of its efforts to enhance operations, it incorporated the Application Edition of the BlackBerry® Enterprise Mobility Suite.



The Organization

Established in 1858, ITOCHU has, over its long history, grown into a major general trading company that represents the whole of Japan. It operates out of 120 locations across 63 countries worldwide, and is involved in a wide range of operations including imports and exports, trilateral trade, and business investment both locally and abroad. It also works in diverse fields ranging from textiles to machinery, metals, energy, chemicals, food products, lifestyle, information, and finance.

The trading business is fast-paced, and ITOCHU's employees communicate constantly with coworkers, suppliers and customers. To keep up, many employees were staying late at the office – racking up long hours of overtime, damaging productivity, and putting their health at risk. To address this, the company recently introduced a “morning-focused working system.”

Under this system, employees are incentivized to work between the hours of 5:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m., when their bodies and minds are fresh and productivity is at its peak. This is a step away from tradition, where employees frequently work overtime until midnight. It also speaks to ITOCHU's approach to business reform as a whole – and the reasons the company chose to align itself with BlackBerry.



From left to right: Mr. Hitoshi Tanaka, Mr. Takashi Kitano, Mr. Shinya Tominag



Mr. Takashi Kitano,
Head of ITOCHU's Corporate IT
Architecture Department and
ITCCERT IT Planning Division

The Challenge

As part of its efforts to reform company-wide work styles, ITOCHU needed to enable its employees to work from outside of their offices. As a result, ITOCHU's IT Planning Division began promoting major changes in the company's communication systems infrastructure, including the shift to Microsoft® Exchange and the introduction of Office® 365. Of the various challenges in this approach, one of the most pressing was to improve the platform's overall performance, creating an environment that would allow for better use of mobile devices.

"At ITOCHU, we conduct night-time processing of our accounting systems starting at 10:00 p.m., and during the busy season coinciding with account settlement, the work often continued until 8:00 a.m. the next morning," explains Takashi Kitano, Head of ITOCHU's Corporate IT Architecture Department and ITCCERT IT Planning Division. "Our first step was to set up a new server and high-performance storage, enabling the fast completion of night-time account systems processing."

This backend automation was an important step towards ITOCHU's morning-focused workplace, but it was only the first. Although employees were now able to take care of tasks like email or working on meeting materials outside the office, this gave rise to a new challenge – the management of a broad set of smart devices. BYOD was one of the most efficient ways to enable ITOCHU's remote workers, but it had to be secure, while offering easy and seamless management.

"Security is essential in the trading business," says Mr. Kitano. "We need to protect sensitive information such as customer names and contract terms."

To meet its secure workforce transformation needs, ITOCHU chose BlackBerry. Kitano and his colleagues found themselves drawn to the simple, user-friendly interface and the advanced security features of BlackBerry® UEM. In particular, features such as secure wipe (which deletes company data from a device automatically if it has not been used for a certain amount of time) were the deciding factor.

“With the introduction of BlackBerry, ITOCHU has built a strong platform for the secure management of mobile devices, including employees’ own smartphones and tablets with significant adoption rates. We’ve created an extremely convenient work environment as a result, complete with the launch of critical in-house applications. We expect BlackBerry will continue to bring great results in future work-style reform efforts and productivity improvements, as well.”

Takashi Kitano,
*Head of Corporate IT
Architecture Department
and ITCERT IT Planning
Division,
ITOCHU Corporation*

The Solution

Initially, ITOCHU decided to use the Collaboration Edition of the BlackBerry® Enterprise Mobility Suite. Company-wide use of the platform set the scene for a much greater organizational change, however. In 2015, the organization entered a new phase in its mobile device utilization efforts – an initiative to develop its own custom mobile apps with BlackBerry® Dynamics. They followed this in November 2016 with an upgrade to the Application Edition of the BlackBerry Enterprise Mobility Suite, which would allow them to securely deploy and manage those applications in-house.

“Although increased productivity is very important to us, that is not the sole reason we chose to develop our own custom applications” explains Mr. Kitano. “Doing so also allows us to explore future possibilities based on how employees respond to what we’ve deployed, selectively innovating where the need arises. That is one of the key reasons we chose BlackBerry – because their platform enables us to take such initiatives.”

ITOCHU has already developed several applications through Microsoft® Xamarin, deploying them with BlackBerry Dynamics, a secure mobile application container built-in to the BlackBerry Enterprise Mobility Suite.

“This was the first time in Japan that anyone had built their own in-house BlackBerry Dynamics-based application using Xamarin, so there were a few challenges,” explains Hitoshi Tanaka of the Corporate IT Architecture Department’s IT Planning Division. “Ultimately, however, I am convinced that we were able to achieve positive results – together, BlackBerry and Xamarin allowed us to deliver new levels of secure productivity between internal and external users.”

The first of ITOCHU’s custom applications, “Ito Denwa,” is a phonebook that allows searches based on name, affiliation within the company, or duration of employment. It’s designed to integrate seamlessly with BlackBerry® Work, allowing for smooth communications via email. It’s also connected to both PBX and the third-party “Dokodemo Naisen” application, which together allow the company’s internal phone network to be used over a smartphone, even by partners, contractors, and other non-traditional employees outside ITOCHU.



Mr. Shinya Tominaga,
Itochu Corporate IT Architecture
Department

In February 2017, the company also began distributing two other applications – “Itraveler” and “Itorun.” Itraveler compiles information regarding the company’s business partners, allowing employees to get information about a partner at a glance, including their address and train transfer information, making it far easier to reach them on Japan’s widely-used public transportation. Itorun, meanwhile, contains easy-to-understand manuals for all ITOCHU’s in-house systems.

ITOCHU is currently developing a fourth in-house app to provide employees with up-to-date news on the organization.

The Results

Since deploying the BlackBerry Enterprise Mobility Suite, ITOCHU has seen excellent results across the board. Its employees are now more efficient and productive, and its mobile data is kept safe no matter where staff work. More importantly, the Suite provides the opportunity to innovate with new custom apps and workflows.

Widespread User Adoption: BlackBerry UEM’s interface was not the only draw for ITOCHU’s staff. BlackBerry Work – an industry-leading PIM app and secure business desktop – proved to be a great hit with ITOCHU’s employees. Employees rarely used the company’s previous mobile infrastructure.

With BlackBerry Work’s best-in-class user interface, BlackBerry Dynamics, and the proactive efforts of ITOCHU’s own app development team, adoption of mobile tools has skyrocketed.

“We include special reports on new tools in our monthly house magazine, and conduct information sessions around once a month for new employees or employees returning from a stint overseas,” explains Mr. Kitano. “In this way, we do our best to make employees comfortable and familiar with the various tools at their disposal.”



Mr. Hitoshi Tanaka,
Itochu Corporate IT Architecture
Department's IT Planning Division

ITOCHU also creates several opportunities for employees to become acquainted with the usefulness of new tools it releases, ensuring everyone's on-board with its mobile efforts.

"Back when we were only using a secure browser for smartphones, the maximum number of users was fewer than 1000," explains Shinya Tominaga of the Corporate IT Architecture Department. "BlackBerry Work's excellent UI quickly gained a good reputation within the company. The number of users passed 2000 in only a few months, and is currently up to 3600."

"We do have employees who exclusively perform desk work, but I think it's safe to say that almost every employee whose job requires the use of a smartphone is now on BlackBerry Work," Mr. Tominaga adds.

Better Productivity and A Better Work-Life Balance: Itochu's employees can now get work done early in the morning, from home, or while travelling. ITOCHU's custom applications and secure infrastructure ensure they can do so efficiently and effectively, without putting corporate data at risk. Even people who were hesitant to use mobile devices have embraced the company's new, Dynamics-enabled infrastructure.

One company executive, for example, previously relied on his secretary to print out emails and type up handwritten replies – now he responds to those emails directly on his own phone using BlackBerry Work.

Reduced IT Support Requirements: With BlackBerry, employees can self-enroll over the air without requiring any additional help from the IT team. The company can deploy over 1,000 devices in a single week, without having to worry about security requirements. And no training is required, because BlackBerry's apps are all simple and intuitive to use.

"From the perspective of a BYOD system, the ability to download various applications from the self-service portal was very important," says Mr. Kitano.

About BlackBerry Limited

BlackBerry Limited is an enterprise software and services company focused on securing and managing IoT endpoints. The company does this with BlackBerry® Secure™, an end-to-end Enterprise of Things platform, comprised of its enterprise communication and collaboration software and safety-certified embedded solutions.

Based in Waterloo, Ontario, BlackBerry Limited was founded in 1984 and operates in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia, Middle East, Latin America and Africa. The Company trades under the ticker symbol "BB" on the Toronto Stock Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange. For more information visit BlackBerry.com, and follow the company on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).