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## Dealer, turned app distributor

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**O2 Centre of Excellence dealer Active Digital is making the jump from airtime to smartphone app sales. Its new 'Pronto' app for remote working is just the ticket, it tells Michael Garwood**

B2B dealer and O2 Centre of Excellence partner Active Digital reckons it has hit upon something special. Sibling founders and directors Richard (pictured) and Jo Groves claim to be more excited about its prospects now than at any time in its 17-year history. Why? Because of a new smartphone application for which it is principal UK and European distributor, which enables field workers to complete and send digital forms back to the office.

Active Digital is not about to forsake its roots, but the success of its 'Pronto' application already in the US, and the new interest in it in the UK, has prompted the brother-sister team to focus seriously as a mobile application distributor. It is new territory, both for Active Digital as a dealership and for established distribution brands in general, only now looking to differentiate by supply of digital services.

"We've always focused on mobile connections to businesses. But we're now thinking outside the box. It's the first product in 17 years where I have really thought, crikey, this is good; this is new and useful. It's a hard market to sell phones, and we don't want to just go to customers on price. They've heard it before.

"This affords customers benefits in terms of efficiencies and cost savings. We are not a flashy company, and we do not draw attention. But our vision is distribution now. We have focused on the end-user through Active Digital, and want that to continue. But we also want to distribute products to dealer partners and networks."



## **New business opportunity**

Active Digital approached Canadian firm Pronto last year to bring its smartphone application to the UK. Pronto has gained a following in the US business market, recently signing network contracts with AT&T and Verizon Wireless. It works on RIM BlackBerry, Windows Mobile and Apple iPhone devices. It allows customers to create and deploy secure real-time forms, and send them back to an office or CRM system. Suggested uses include retail merchandising, field inspections, timesheets, health and safety forms, prescriptions, equipment readings, expense and mileage reports, audits, checklists and inspections.

The solution saves time, boosts productivity, reduces paper workloads and improves 'green' practices. To date, Active Digital has signed 15 customers – including a security firm that has taken 5,000 licences at £15 a go. Eighty have expressed an interest, and UK network operators have been in touch.

Licences allow unlimited creation of new forms. Active Digital wants to sell the Pronto application among its own base, as well as via fellow dealers and UK networks. O2 is an obvious candidate. Active Digital has agreed total alignment with it as a dealer, and has 13,000 O2 connections on its books. It won't discuss the matter, however.

"The take up has been very good, and we're ready to distribute licences in both the UK and Europe," says Groves.

It is taking, mostly, bespoke orders from niche companies. A government fostering agency has been in touch to see incidents in the field are reported quickly, and a proper audit trail is retained and actionable. The 'Baby P' case has put answerable processes at the top of the agenda. At present, such agencies visiting children in care or at risk must fill out long forms on site, sometimes 25 pages long, and again input the data in a work computer on their return to the office, and then ensure forms are filed within five days. The government has just ordered the turnaround be reduced to two days as pressure on eliminating administrative errors has built.

The bespoke Pronto solution allows data to be entered in a mobile device on site, and sent via either a Wi-Fi or mobile network connection. Also, each application is given a GPS stamp, time and date to provide additional proof to businesses. Its fostering form was created to enable a priority system requesting action also. Images can be added also. Active Digital is working with a mystery shopper company that delivers restaurant reports and a carkit firm that wants to guard against false insurance claims filed for damage during work.

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