

# Case Study: Residential Services

## Pope Plumbing

### Situation

Pope Plumbing was founded in 1990 by Richard Pope and Tim Chapman and has grown to become one of Dallas-Fort Worth's most trusted plumbing companies. With a knowledgeable, service-oriented staff of 25 people, Pope's licensed plumbing and gas fitting journeymen provide a comprehensive range of services to commercial and residential establishments, property management firms, food service accounts, and multi-unit apartment complexes. They also provide new construction and tenant fit-out work for hotels, hospitals, schools, churches, and warehouses.

### Problem

Collecting payments in the field had become an expensive, risky process for Pope Plumbing. Field technicians had to phone in credit card numbers after each service call, which took from five to ten minutes. Technicians would often hurry to close the ticket and would sometimes transpose the numbers. This mistake was often not uncovered until later, when the back office staff would attempt to process the transaction. Sometimes, in the rush to get to the next call, credit card numbers were just written down on the invoice for later processing, an identity theft risk. Once the technician left the customer's property and discovered that the credit card number was incorrect, it was up to Pope's accounting team to try and recover the funds.

Accepting checks was also a problem. Unable to process the check at the customer's house, there was no way for the technician to know if the check was good. As Tim Chapman, co-owner of Pope Plumbing said, "The customer mindset in a plumbing service call is generally unhappy, similar to a tow truck call. It's an unscheduled, frequently large expense, and some of them will look for ways to not pay. After repairs were completed, some customers would stop payment on the checks, which meant collection headaches for us."

Tim continued that the options for recovering payment are limited. The company could try to pursue the customer with phone calls and letters, but that is time consuming and often ineffective. They also had the option to turn the account over to a lawyer or collections agency to recover the funds, but the fees for each of these methods often came close to or equal the amount of the ticket. Finally, they could choose to simply write off the amount of the call. The company was experiencing over \$6,000 every year in bad tickets, and was looking for a way to improve their credit card payment method while reducing the number of bad checks and stopped payments.

### Challenge

Pope Plumbing allows its technicians to take the company's trucks home at the end of each shift. As a result, technicians only come to the home office every couple of weeks to drop off checks they have collected. Once the checks were in the office, it could take as many as another ten days to account for the payments, reconcile against invoices, take the checks to the bank and wait for the checks to clear. In some cases, more than 20 days elapsed by the time Pope Plumbing discovered they had received a bad check. Customers who had received repairs three weeks prior were sometimes not cooperative in working with Pope to send another check.

Given the large number of checks being brought into the office every couple of weeks, the accounting staff was spending more and more time at the bank, and Pope Plumbing was looking for a way to reduce these time consuming trips and improve its payment processes.

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"Adopting Mobiliscape has made an enormous impact to our business. We're saving thousands of dollars a year now that our technicians can identify bad checks right at the customer's house. We also save money since we now get better processing rates by swiping cards rather than by manually calling in the numbers. We get our money faster, we save in collection fees, we've eliminated trips to the bank, and we have better visibility into our financial health. This was a huge win for us and we view it as one of our primary competitive advantages."

**Tim Chapman, Co-Owner**  
**Pope Plumbing**

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## Solution

Pope Plumbing adopted the Mobilescape<sup>®</sup> 5000, the market's first solution that enables residential services companies to process both checks and credit cards at the customer's home. Designed and manufactured in the U.S., Mobilescape is providing Pope Plumbing with a complete wireless credit card and check payment processing solution that includes hardware, software, integration services, wireless service, support and maintenance.

The rugged Mobilescape terminal enables secure, rapid payment transactions anywhere. It is easy to use and provides the convenience of accepting both checks and credit cards - all in one unit. Billions of checks are written every year, but the number of bounced and lost checks continues to increase - a serious financial risk.

Now with Mobilescape, Pope Plumbing is using Mobilescape to convert paper checks to electronic payments at the customer's house and to expedite the collection of funds. With the appropriate check verification and guarantee subscriptions, funds are usually deposited within two business days.

## Results and Return on Investment

Pope Plumbing has identified a noticeable return on investment since adopting the Mobilescape 5000. They have seen process improvements in the field and in the back office that are saving the company substantial money.

- They are catching more check declines in the field, and have reduced the number of bad checks and stopped payments.
- On check transactions, they are now getting paid in one to two days, rather than in 15-20 days.
- They are catching declined credit cards and are able to ask for alternative payment before they ever leave the customer's house.
- They are no longer at risk of transposing credit card numbers, since they don't need to call them in over the phone.

Pope Plumbing has also seen improvements in the customer experience. While customers at first were unfamiliar with electronic check processing, they were very impressed with the ability to watch the technician swipe a check for the amount of the purchase, and then receive the voided check on the spot. Given the threat of fraud and identity theft, customers were also very happy that the checks and credit cards never left their sight. Finally, they also were pleased that their personal credit card numbers were not written on invoices and that their checks were no longer stored in the trucks until they returned to the office.

For more information, please contact Mobilescape by BankServ at 1-866-255-5500 or at [sales@commerciant.com](mailto:sales@commerciant.com).



"We love the reporting capabilities of the secure Mobilescape Manager Internet site. We use its reports on a daily basis to see the dollar amount we collect, activity by terminal, and the business done by each of our technicians. It's providing us visibility into our business metrics that we've never had before."

**Jacob Feldkamp, Controller**  
**Pope Plumbing**