# CASE STUDY:

## PIKESVILE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY IMPROVES PROCESSES BY GOING PAPERLESS

**Industry: Fire Safety**

### APPS USED

- Broken Equipment Form
- Expense Report- Station 32
- PVFC- Maintenance Check

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Equipment repair time goes from weeks to days
- Improved inspection accuracy
- Faster and easier tracking of volunteer training

## BACKGROUND

**[Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company](#) (PVFC) has been protecting Pikesville, Maryland since 1897. As the second oldest volunteer fire department in Baltimore county, it is the only station in Baltimore County that operates an engine, tower, heavy rescue squad, and medic, offering a full range of fire suppression, rescue and EMS services for the community.**

Though much has changed since 1897, record keeping has continued on paper. Yet, with a fully volunteer force, paper record management has become a heavier and heavier burden for the department.

This burden was affecting the PVFC in various ways. When members would go out and buy supplies for the station, it could take weeks for reimbursement (if the treasurer could even read the crumpled receipt).

When a truck or piece of equipment would break, the process to verify/repair it was especially slow. If a fire truck malfunctioned, the lieutenant/engineer would have to come into the station to verify the issue, and order the correct part. If a lieutenant was out on the road for business, it could be days or over a week before that truck would be serviceable again.

Justin, both 1st Rescue Lieutenant at PVFC and Director of Channel Sales at Canvas, saw Canvas as a solution to these slow and cumbersome processes.

## SOLUTION & RESULTS

In April 2014, they decided to go with Canvas, the global leader in mobile apps for business. PVFC found the transition easy and full supported. "I received a report from a volunteer I hadn't even trained." Justin said, "that shows you how accessible the platform is."

**PVFC found itself in the same position thousands of Canvas customers have; the Canvas platform—with 14,000+ customizable mobile apps, the app builder and real-time app management—was revolutionizing their internal processes.**

PVFC has seen real, measurable results from implementing Canvas. Some of their immediate benefits include:

## Faster Equipment Repair

Previously, PVFC struggled with repairing equipment quickly due to the time required to record the information, time for the lieutenant to come in to visually confirm the issue, and then order the new parts needed. Due to the volunteer nature of the department, it could be days or a week before a lieutenant would be able to get to the station to visually check, delaying repairs.

With Canvas, this process has been dramatically streamlined. Volunteers collect the issues directly on an iPad. This documentation goes straight to the cloud and is emailed to the appropriate lieutenant immediately afterwards. With the ability to capture photos, lieutenants can look at the issue, and visually confirm the problem wherever they are.

By eliminating paper forms, PVFC has dramatically sped up their repair cycle. What once took over a week to order now happens in a day or less.

## More Accurate Data

In addition to improving their equipment repair process, PVFC now captures more accurate information with Canvas. The Department of Transportation requires inspections of fire company vehicles twice a month. PVFC often struggled with incomplete forms, information filled out that didn't pertain to the vehicle, and uncertainty on who inspected the vehicles.

With Canvas these issues have been largely eliminated. By utilizing required fields, PVFC forms come back with all the necessary information. If a form is missing fields, then the volunteer won't be able to submit the form. This forces completion of inspections with all necessary documentation.

In addition, conditional screens ensure that inspections occur quickly and cover the appropriate parts of the truck. For instance, their Heavy Rescue doesn't have a pump, so that section of the inspection can be skipped.

On mobile devices, information is now safe from coffee spills and dirty cars. By no longer having to do manual data re-entry or chase down missing information, PVFC estimates that they'll save hundreds of hours this year.

## Easier Volunteer Tracking

In PVFC, there's a credit system. Volunteers get credits for showing up to trainings, or fundraisers. With paper forms, employees had to sign in by hand at these events. Afterwards, someone else would have to enter this information a second time, and try to decipher messy handwriting or illegible ID numbers. Not only did this take away time from other projects, but also allowed room for human error.

Today with Canvas, PVFC can track volunteer credits more easily with almost no admin work. Volunteers can pick their name from a drop down list, and their ID number automatically populates. Hours automatically calculate eliminating mathematical errors. This means less time trying to find information, reduced mistakes, more accurate systems, and more time to focus on keeping Pikesville safe.

## Flexibility to Meet Evolving Organizational Needs

As a cloud-based, mobile platform combined with an easy-to-use mobile app builder, Canvas provides PVFC the flexibility to quickly add new features and functionality to any of their mobile apps. As needs evolve and change, Canvas apps can be updated easily, with no programming required.

For instance, as they have new volunteers, PVFC can go into their Canvas account and simply update the volunteer list they use in their check in app. Within seconds, the list changes will be updated for all their future events. This allows for an easy transition, with limited possibility for errors.

Other mobile app alternatives make this process cumbersome or costly, weakening the effectiveness of their platforms. With Canvas it is a frictionless process at no additional cost.

**With Canvas, PVFC continues to get rid of their paper forms. They've cut down administrative work, and improved information accuracy. Though much has changed since 1897, PVFC's commitment to Pikesville safety remains the same.**