

EXPLORER™ 500 TOOK A COOL LEAD IN THE FJÄLLRÄVEN POLAR RACE



© Photographer Per Engman

USER:

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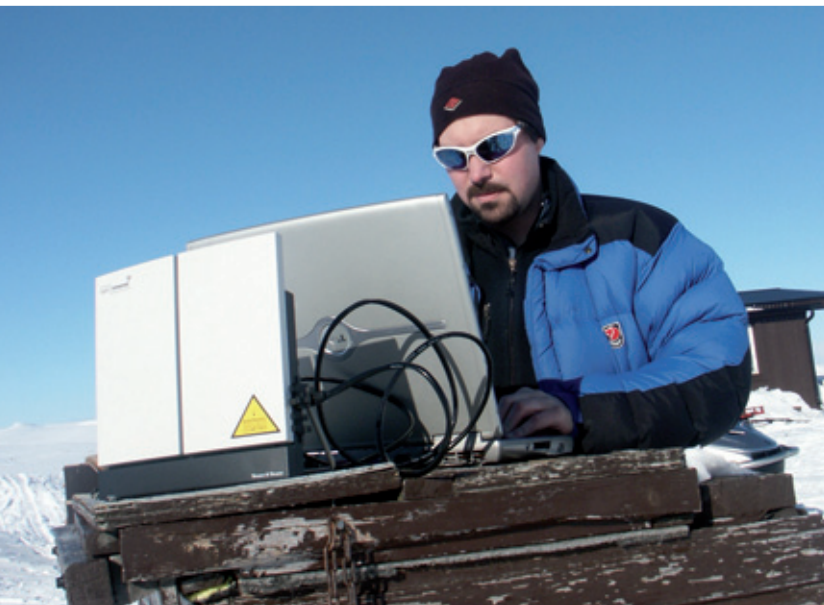
HARDWARE:

EXPLORER 500
EXPLORER Bluetooth handset

Once a year, Fjällräven hosts the highly acclaimed dog sledge race Fjällräven Polar, which takes place in the untouched and rugged wilderness of Norway and Sweden, north of the Arctic Circle. Telemar Scandinavia supplies the technical equipment needed to uphold safety for the contestants.

The race starts in Signaldalen near the Arctic Sea, and the competitors are transported by plane to the Norwegian coastal town of Tromsø and then directly on to the starting line in Signaldalen. Here intensive training begins in order to turn the world's most promising outdoor beginners into skilled dog sledge experts in one of the most demanding winter surroundings in the Nordic hemisphere. The ultimate finish to it all is a memorable prize giving ceremony in the crystal hall of the famous ICEHOTEL in Jukkasjärvi.

In 2006, the Fjällräven Polar race had 12 mixed teams from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, U.K., Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Korea, Germany and Switzerland. None of the participants had any kind of experience in dog sledging and only limited experience in living in the wild where temperatures may drop below -30° Celsius (-22° Fahrenheit) during the night. The purpose of the race is to prove that, with the right training and equipment, anybody can safely enjoy and experience the great untouched wilderness.



“Even close to 70 degrees north, the signal strength on the EXPLORER 500 was very strong. Furthermore, the battery capacity on the terminal was impressive – also when temperatures went below -15 to -20° Celsius. And most importantly, connections never failed”

Kristian Ryberg, Sales Director, Telemar Scandinavia AB

Challenge:

One of the key factors for an event such as Fjällräven Polar is communication. The very foundation of the race consists in the fact that it is carried out in Scandinavia's last true wilderness. The idea is to exist and compete in an environment far from civilization where mobile phones do not work. As such, satellite is the only means of communication, and the race must uphold a high level of safety. With 12 teams spread out along a 300 km race course, 12 separate scooter teams, 8 checkpoints and stand-by medical assistance, clear communication is crucial. The interest from the media demands a facility that enables journalists to communicate with their respective offices. Also, the web serves as an information channel and must be updated at least three times a day with new reports directly from the race.

In 2006, as well as in races during the past years, Telemar delivered all communications related to the race. On earlier occasions, Fjällräven has been using Inmarsat GAN as the main tool for communicating with the rest of the world during the race. However, the 2006 race offered a perfect opportunity for Telemar to test and evaluate how the new Thrane & Thrane EXPLORER 500 solution would meet the demands of efficient high speed connections under very harsh conditions. Would it live up to its promise of – “ease of use”, “flexibility” and “high speed data rates”? Would it provide a secure link to safety in an extremely tough environment? Fjällräven was eager to try it out.

Solution:

On a daily basis during the race, Fjällräven utilized the EXPLORER 500 to send 2-3 articles and 15-20 high resolution images for immediate publishing on the Internet along with the race results from each check point. Predominantly, Fjällräven used the circuit switched service, but also had the opportunity to test the streaming services. Voice was mainly used for security purposes and only to a limited extent.

Why BGAN:

Simplicity, flexibility and reliability are all sought after keywords for everyone involved with the race – even more so when dealing with communication under rugged conditions. As such, BGAN deserved attention and proved itself a prudent choice fulfilling its promises of user friendliness. With a vast number of services and close to global satellite coverage, it is well suited for communication in any given setting.

Pay-off:

Having tried out the EXPLORER 500 and BGAN, Fjällräven found the system very easy to use. Even close to 70 degrees north, the signal strength of the EXPLORER 500 was very strong (as high as 50-55). Furthermore, the battery capacity on the terminal was impressive – also when temperatures went below -15 to -20° Celsius (-26 to -29° Fahrenheit). And most importantly, connections never failed and resulted in the EXPLORER 500 functioning as an important lifeline in the event of accidents and injuries among the participants and functionaries. Jonas Hellentin, Event Manager at Fjällräven sums it up: “The Thrane & Thrane EXPLORER 500 played a leading role in providing the media with results, articles, and pictures – as well as safety communications during the race.”

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