



J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc. selects Velociti to install more than 18,000 trailer tracking systems

J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc., based in Lowell, Arkansas, operates more than 11,000 tractors and as many as 20,000 trailers, making it one of the largest transportation logistics providers in North America. One of the first trucking operations in North America to adopt trailer-tracking systems, since 2001 J.B. Hunt has deployed about 18,000 units for tracking untethered trailers, including those with load sensing capability.

“These systems provide increased visibility into trailer locations,” explains Elaine Chaudoin, a 25-year veteran of J.B. Hunt who served as Vice President of Operations Services and is now a consultant to the company. “These systems improve workflow and streamline the supply chain because everyone has the same up to date information on every piece of equipment.”

The Challenges

J.B. Hunt opted to have the trailer tracking systems installed from inside the trailers. This meant the trailers needed to be empty for the installation. Locating nearly 18,000 empty trailers was a significant challenge. “The installation would have been an easier process if we could have done the work at one of our many facilities,” relates Chaudoin. “Our trailers are almost always loaded when they are at one of our locations, so we had to use our customers’ facilities. Utilizing customer facilities and coordinating the timing of installers with empty trailers increased the challenge significantly.”

Installing the systems in a timely manner was an absolute necessity. “Our ability to realize the benefits of the trailer tracking systems, including better utilization and improved customer service, was dependent on installing the systems as quickly as possible,” Chaudoin states. “We could not fully utilize the systems’ capabilities or realize much of our return on investment, if they were only installed in part of the fleet. We couldn’t establish processes to use the information they provide to effectively manage operations.”

Flexible, adaptable and cost effective installation plans, as well as an efficient management process were all important to J.B. Hunt because the fleet’s needs changed over time. In the beginning there were many trailers requiring installations, making technician scheduling easier. As more trailer tracking systems were installed, however, coordinating technicians with trailers still requiring installations became more difficult. Also needed was a system for tracking the progress of the installations.

J.B. Hunt required a mobile rollout that made the most effective use of available inhouse and external resources. The company considered training technicians at its 46 company maintenance facilities to install the trailer tracking systems but realized that wasn't an efficient solution. "Our maintenance staff is busy full-time handling preventive maintenance and repair work," Chaudoin notes, "so using them to handle trailer tracking system installations required time they didn't have. Staffing up for the project didn't make sense either because we'd have to let the extra staff go when the work was done."

The Solutions

J.B. Hunt turned to Velociti, Inc.; the industry leader in mobility rollout project management, mobile installations and technology deployment after determining that turning to an expert outside firm was the best choice. Working together-- including having a Velociti project manager on site at J.B. Hunt-- the two companies found effective solutions to address trailer tracking system installation challenges. Velociti and J.B. Hunt's operations staff determined where empty trailers would be located by narrowing an initial list of over 1,700 customer locations to about 100 sites, mainly at large distribution centers, and then to 28 locations where at least 100 trailers could be found per day. Ultimately, Velociti assigned installation crews to cover a 50-mile radius around 11 hubs, mostly consisting of customer locations where empty trailers could be found.

Velociti worked with J.B. Hunt to find trailers at customer locations immediately after they are unloaded and install the trailer tracking systems in a timely manner. The initial objective Velociti established for each of its two-person crews was to install 90 systems each week. Each crew was trained and tasked with handling as many as five different solutions for each trailer, including system upgrades, partial installations, full installations, system service or troubleshooting.

A flexible and cost effective program to put the efficient and trained Velociti installation crews to work was also established. Plans included a set number of weeks consisting of six, 10-12 hour days during which the crews would complete as many trailers as possible. Also established were a daily rate plan per location and a pay per trailer fee. The different plans came into play depending on the number of trailers that needed installations in each location.

Velociti employed technology to streamline the installation process. To enable its crews to quickly identify a trailer's needs, access inventory and complete installations, the company developed a custom database of all J.B. Hunt trailers and loaded the information on Symbol handheld units. Velociti crews would enter a trailer number to see what service was needed on each particular unit. Bar code scanners in the handhelds were also used to log in tracking system serial numbers and eliminate the potential for entry errors or mismatched data.

Each night, the handheld data was uploaded to a master database at Velociti that automatically recalculated the status of all 18,000 trailers in the J.B. Hunt fleet. Updates were then sent to every crew before the next day's work began. At the same time,

Velociti enabled J.B. Hunt's management to have instant online access to the database, providing a scorecard on the rollout's progress as well as the ability to export information and generate reports for analysis.

The Benefits

The process Velociti put in place for J.B. Hunt resulted in the installation of nearly 18,000 trailer tracking systems in about 18 months. For J.B. Hunt, Velociti quickly proved it had the resources, experience and willingness to work with the carrier to adjust to a workflow demand based on trailer availability. "Velociti had the expertise and offered us the flexibility we needed, as well as provided high quality service," states Chaudoin "More importantly, when our needs changed they were willing to work with us to search for a solution that benefited both companies."

Currently, J.B. Hunt is in the process of determining how it will upgrade its existing trailer tracking and load sensing systems by evaluating suppliers and system functionality. Possibilities include replacing entire systems or upgrading existing units. The fleet is also exploring the possibility of replacing its in-cab mobile communications and tracking systems on tractors.

"Regardless of the system we choose," Chaudoin says, "if we need to use an outside service for mobile installations, we'll turn to Velociti. They were clearly the best choice because it was quickly evident that Velociti knew more about this than any one else. Velociti has proven they're qualified, their flexibility was unmatched and most importantly, we know we can trust them."

About Velociti Inc.

Kansas City-based Velociti Inc. was founded in 1989 as a division of Central States Thermo King. The company was created to provide mobile installation and service technicians that perform all aspects of technology deployments for the transportation, retail and warehousing market sectors. Velociti clients include many Fortune 500 companies from wide variety of market segments, including transportation, technology, retail, food service, distribution and manufacturing. Velociti has achieved double-digit sales growth every year since 1995 and now offers service in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Western Europe. For more information visit www.velociti.us or call 913-233-7227.

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