



Case Study

Corporate Express Delivers Improved Customer Service to Canadian Market

Mobile handheld computers and GPS tracking make delivery more reliable and efficient

At a Glance

Industry:

Transportation and Logistics

Market:

Office, Computer, Furniture and Facility Supplies Supplier

Application:

Transportation and Logistics

Product:

Intermec 761 handheld computers

Partner:

Complete Innovations



C O R P O R A T E E X P R E S S

Corporate Express, the world’s largest business-to-business suppliers of essential office and computer products, has one of the most advanced distribution structures in the industry with approximately 2,300 delivery routes in North America traveled by 1,100 delivery vehicles. A steadfast commitment to service, distribution expertise and technology excellence challenges the company to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of its delivery process and ability to meet customer needs.

Having relied on paper manifests, manual data entry and phone communications to complete its delivery process for many years, Corporate Express Canada soon realized that little real-time information existed about delivery activity in the field, including delivery status, times and signatures. System updates took place the following day and had the potential to include human error. Such a system slowed the responsiveness of Corporate Express’ customer service department and its ability to quickly access information to respond to customer inquiries regarding receipt of an order or its status in the field.

“We have a large investment in our delivery fleet and the service they provide,” said Joseph Mignella, Manager of IT Business Services, Corporate Express Canada. “And we want to make sure we are maximizing that investment.”

In 2005, Complete Innovations, a leading global provider of mission

critical operational solutions for mobile workforce and transportation-related companies, launched a project in six of Corporate Express’ Canadian locations – Dartmouth, St. John’s, Mississauga, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver. The project was designed to automate Corporate Express’ delivery process using Intermec’s 761 handheld computers and Complete Innovations’ Fleet Complete software, a real-time fleet management and tracking solution. Each of the 60 Corporate Express drivers in the locations can now work exclusively from the Intermec devices to obtain electronic PODs. The solution also includes a GPS tracking system that can track driver location at one-minute intervals throughout the day.

According to Raul Marin, National Transportation Manager, Corporate Express expects to see improvements in driver productivity and efficiency as a result of the implementation.

“Not only will this solution improve the service we provide to our customers, but the information about driver performance serves as a coaching tool for our transportation managers as we work to improve driver efficiency,” Marin said. “More efficient drivers, means happier customers.”

From the DC to the Field

Corporate Express delivers an average of \$16 million in office, computer products, facility supplies and furniture every

business day in North America, which results in approximately 100 orders per driver per day. For Corporate Express drivers, the day begins in the distribution center where drivers receive the day's delivery routes. Although the old paper manifests sorted deliveries by sequence, drivers were handling 20 to 30 pages of order information containing four orders per page, including customer location, delivery size and total weight. When a new customer was added to the route, the driver was required to shuffle pages to determine where it belonged on the route before the information was ever entered into the system for future sequencing. This resulted in excess time spent in the distribution center -- time better spent on the road.

With the new Intermec devices, Corporate Express expects to decrease the time drivers spend in the DC planning the trip by at least 70 percent from 30 minutes to between five and ten minutes. The information from the paper manifests is electronically downloaded daily onto the Intermec handhelds and sequenced for the driver. This gives the driver a summary-level view of the order and the ability to manipulate the information as necessary or access more details if required. Bar code scanning with the device validates the order to decrease the likelihood of mistakes. For added convenience, the customer can sign for the delivery directly on the device where it is electronically time stamped and updates directly to Corporate Express' system daily.

"It was important that we take advantage of the medium itself," Mignella said. "Complete Innovations worked a design suitable for both the device and the drivers. Sorting and grouping techniques help drivers identify jobs

that belong together and icon identifiers notate special order conditions so the driver knows when to look for more information. All the critical information is up front and hyperlinks allow access to detailed information that was available on the paper manifest."

Mapping and Tracking

To add value to the delivery management solution, Complete Innovations' Fleet Complete software includes a GPS mapping feature which tracks each driver's coordinates at one minute intervals throughout the day. Each delivery vehicle contains a GPS system integrated with the Intermec handheld to provide real-time tracking of the driver's location. Once in the system, Corporate Express can perform a history playback of any given time period.

"By pinpointing when the delivery was made and its sequence, we can predict what time the driver will be at the next location and measure performance accordingly," Marin said. "We expect that this function will help us to increase the productivity and efficiency of our runs, improve driver reliability and save time fulfilling the POD requests we receive from customer service."

Marin says that he expects stops per hour to increase by 15 to 20 percent from six to seven stops to 6.5 to 7.5. He added that this number is highly influenced by the route and how many customers are included on each stop.

Connectivity is Key

With several connectivity options, the Intermec handhelds are a one-stop solution for Corporate Express. To optimize device-to-server communication throughout the day, the Intermec devices

are updated each morning and evening with the day's delivery information via Corporate Express' 802.11 network. While on the road, the device utilizes a high speed wireless network to download POD updates and GPS locations to the server every 15 minutes.

"The ability to provide real-time communication among head office, drivers and customers has enhanced our capabilities as an organization," said Ed Meyer, VP Operations, Corporate Express Canada. "We are now closing the loop from the moment the customer places an order until when it is received. Tracking goods instantaneously and storing signatures electronically gives us a huge competitive advantage in customer service."

Looking Ahead

With the first phase of the project well underway and a sixth implementation in Vancouver, Corporate Express will soon begin rolling out a second phase. This phase will incorporate 40 additional drivers at Corporate Express' seventh and final Canadian location in Quebec. Application enhancements such as French capabilities will also improve the user experience and improve on data collection.

"Our project focus is two-fold," Mignella said. "Fulfilling customer needs with reliable information to help their business and providing best-of-breed technology to constantly enhance the working environment for our employees. Complete Innovations together with Intermec have proven that they understand our unique business needs and continue to offer us the best customized solutions, resources and support to meet these long and short-term goals."

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