AT&T Business

Cal Freight goes the distance with Internet of Things-based electronic logging system

- **Business Needs** - A better way to gather and report truck and driver statistics to improve operational efficiency and meet U.S. Department of Transportation electronic logging requirements

- **Networking Solution** - Integrated Internet of Things solution automates management of fleets, assets and mobile workforce

- **Business Value** - Reduced costs and downtime, maximized productivity, safety and efficiency, and simplified compliance with government mandates

- **Industry Focus** - Custom transportation services

- **Size** - Footprint includes 48 states, Canada and Mexico

About California Freight

Since 1989, Cal Freight has provided custom transportation services to all industries. Strategic involvement in brokerage, rail/port drayage, food grade tankers and warehousing keeps the company at the forefront of the transportation industry. Cal Freight meets customers' needs for refrigerated, dry, or specialized equipment, shipping across the nation and around the world, with logistics support that meets diverse customer needs.

Situation

Cal Freight and other commercial transportation providers faced a deadline to comply with the federal electronic logging device (ELD) rule, enacted by Congress to help create a safer work environment for truckers and make it easier to track and share transportation records. The company needed to begin using ELDS to automatically record driving time, for easier, more accurate hours of service (HOS) reporting.

Solution

Cal Freight chose AT&T Fleet Complete® to help comply with the federal ELD mandate and streamline its operations. Company drivers now use tablets integrated with the Fleet Complete ELD application, a flexible, affordable and easy-to-use Internet of Things solution that quickly captures driver and trucking data and provides Cal Freight keen insights into how to efficiently manage and scale its growing business.

Custom transportation services, family values

California Freight meets the varied needs of its domestic clients with made-to-order brokerage, transportation and warehousing solutions. Its brokerage operations provide customers comprehensive management services engineered to solve their transportation challenges and extend the reach of their freight deliveries. The company's transportation division supplies asset, rail/port drayage, tanker and heavy haul services throughout the continental U.S., Canada and Mexico. And its
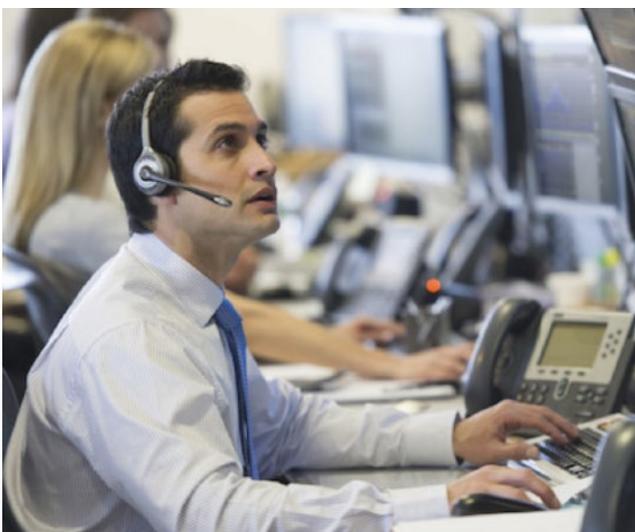
warehouse division offers leading-edge logistics services with 300,000 square feet of warehousing space in strategic locations in the San Joaquin Valley, with excellent freeway access throughout the region.

Strong family values have shaped Cal Freight's growth over the years, enabling the Ripon, California-based company to become a versatile, reliable, multi-modal transportation provider. The company founded by Dave Sanders nearly 30 years ago is still operated by the Sanders family and others who share Sanders' vision. Although Cal Freight has become a large corporation, its leaders continue to cultivate strong relationships with employees, customers and others with whom it does business.

"We try to treat employees like members of our family, and give them the flexibility that everybody needs at times," said Paul Hamilton, Cal Freight's director of transportation. This attitude has created a loyal workforce and helped to forge strong relationships with customers and suppliers.

Capitalizing on the challenge of change

Collecting and reporting data can be problematic for most organizations, but especially those like Cal Freight that have so many mobile assets and employees. "We capture lots of data and try to track and trace the movements of every driver and truck, for legal and compliance reasons," Hamilton said. When Congress passed a law requiring companies like Cal Freight to use Electronic Logging Devices (ELDs), Cal Freight officials began looking for a way to comply with the federal law and leverage new opportunities made possible by the Internet of Things.

> "To move our transportation business forward, we need to be able to capture as much data as we can on every driver and every truck's movements. In every aspect of our business—operations, legal, compliance—we have a greater need to gather this data as efficiently as possible."

Paul Hamilton
Director of Transportation, Cal Freight

Under the law, all commercial drivers who are required to prepare hours-of-service (HOS) records of duty status must now use electronic logging devices that are certified and registered with the Federal Motor Carrier Transportation Association. The law also defines a number of supporting documents drivers and carriers have to maintain.

Cal Freight's leaders understood the law's potential to further enhance safety and business processes, so they were quick to begin the search for the right ELD solution. The company was already using GPS

and other technology to track its trucks and drivers. "To move our transportation business forward, we need to be able to capture as much data as we can on every driver and every truck's movements," he said. "In every aspect of our business—operations, legal, compliance—we have a greater need to gather this data as efficiently as possible."

The company wanted to make as much information as possible available to its stakeholders. "Like any industry, we needed a way to track and trace the data and pull it together into a form that's as easily formattable as possible to disseminate to our different users," said Hamilton.

Officials also had to decide what kind of technology and software they needed, and whether to hardwire the solution into tractors, provide drivers with devices, or require the drivers to supply their own devices.

Cost-effectiveness, trust, integrity

Cal Freight opted to buy a tablet computer for each driver, which Hamilton acknowledged was the most expensive way to proceed since the company has more drivers than tractors. It initially planned to purchase the tablets from AT&T and use data plans from the company's existing wireless provider. Once officials reviewed both companies' pricing, the plan changed. "It didn't take but a minute to see the difference," Hamilton said.

"The solution AT&T offered was so much more cost effective, and there was trust and integrity built into the AT&T offer," Hamilton said. "And that laid the groundwork for quickly moving forward to the more comprehensive ELD solution." In addition to buying

the tablets and data plan from AT&T, Cal Freight also chose AT&T Fleet Complete, a suite of GPS-based tracking and management solutions that collect and send vital information between companies' operations staff, mobile workers and fleet vehicles.

"The AT&T and Fleet Complete teams were very responsive in providing us clear information on what they could offer. AT&T, working closely with Fleet Complete, simply offered the better ELD option," said Hamilton. He added that the pricing was better on not only the AT&T tablets and data plan but also on the Fleet Complete system.

More effective management of assets on the move

Beyond competitive pricing, the AT&T Fleet Complete solution works well for Cal Freight because of the user-friendly hardware and software, and the advantages of having a tightly integrated solution from one vendor team. "With AT&T Fleet Complete, we have a total ELD solution under one roof," Hamilton said. "We've got one number to call. No time wasted on finger pointing, just faster problem solving."

Equally important, the AT&T Fleet Complete solution enables Cal Freight to more efficiently collect data, more accurately monitor truck and driver locations and streamline essential everyday tasks like building driver schedules and dispatching drivers. The solution's Fleet Tracker component enables Cal Freight to manage and track its vehicles in real time via a modem installed in each vehicle. Fleet Tracker also allows the company to receive alerts, automate driver logs and manifests, and run reports on past activity to help contain operating costs.

Cal Freight also incorporated the Hours of Service component in its Fleet Complete solution to help drivers comply with federal HOS regulations, which govern the working and driving hours of anyone operating a commercial motor vehicle. Drivers no longer have to maintain paper logs, as the ELDs automatically document their trips with complete electronic logs.

> "With AT&T Fleet Complete, we have a total ELD solution under one roof. We've got one number to call. No time wasted on finger pointing, just faster problem solving."
>
> **Paul Hamilton**
> Director of Transportation for Cal Freight

Keeping it simple from end-to-end

The primary benefit of the AT&T Fleet Complete solution can be summed up concisely: greater ease in gathering data. While there was some initial resistance from a few drivers, most have easily adapted to using the ELDs. "The ones that are using it love it," Hamilton said. "We've seen lots of 'aha' and 'whoa, that's cool' moments."

While the federal requirement to implement ELD on deadline was the initial catalyst for adding the AT&T Fleet Complete system, he said, "the overriding benefit to our company comes in the solution's ability to greatly enhance our ability to track and gather data."

"This positively impacts all aspects of our business," he added, "from our drivers' being able to quickly and easily record hours of service via e-logs, to our dispatchers working in multiple transportation offices being able to leverage this data to efficiently plan drivers' schedules based on hours of service and service compliance."

Confidence in a proven technology partner

Hamilton uses words like consistent, supportive and responsive in describing Cal Freight's relationship with the AT&T and Fleet Complete teams. "We've had complete confidence every step of the way—from my initial discussion with the local AT&T retail store to working with the AT&T Fleet Complete teams to set up and deploy the integrated tablets and the software," he says.

Having AT&T specialists come onsite to help set up the tablets expedited the rollout process—and saved the company time and money.

Hamilton knows and trusts AT&T's proven capabilities to efficiently deploy and synchronize all components of the Fleet Complete solution. "We're building on a solid foundation here," he says. "This is definitely not the kind of project where you want to jump in with a smaller 'mom-and-pop' kind of application. AT&T has the level of strength and support we can rely on."

Hamilton says he has recommended AT&T Fleet Complete to peers at other transportation companies. "I say to them, 'while you may not want to end any current vendor contracts, you're going to want to move to the AT&T Fleet Complete solution when the time comes.'"

The road ahead

The focus now is building on the foundation of the ELD system, but Cal Freight sees new uses for this kind of IoT technology in the future.

"Right now, we are concentrating on the primary infrastructure for our ELD system processes," Hamilton said. "Our goal is to get one-hundred percent of our drivers using ELDs and having every dispatcher and manager understanding the back end of the system, so they can go in and grab the data they want."

After that, Cal Freight will turn its attention to the administrative side, where the company is counting on more support from AT&T and Fleet Complete to help build the kind of reports that will assist the company in operating even more effectively.

"Technology is always speeding ahead," Hamilton said. "Next on the horizon for us, we'd like to all be able to have electronic tracking capabilities for every trailer."