

# Mobile Data can improve the quality of your decisions

By Corinne Watson and Dave Ffowcs Williams

Data without a structure or a vision is like having a tractor unit without its semi trailer. Too many companies buy a data system and don't use it. **Don't move from a mountain of paper to a mountain of data.**

All the major players are using mobile data; 94% of the courier industry have some form of mobile data and freight companies ranging from small metro dispatch to large multi million dollar operators can't be wrong.

## What is mobile data?

Your mobile workforce needs a record of the jobs they have to do. You need a record of the jobs in progress and outstanding. Mobile data is a way of communicating information relating to job detail and their progress and recording every transaction along the way; without all of the baggage of handwriting misinterpretations, time delays, lost dockets and key entry and after-the-event reporting which the traditional paper system carries.

The tangible difference may appear to be a hand held computer for your field staff, a mobile terminal in the trucks of your fleet or a scan gun in your warehouse, but operationally, this could be your ticket to power and results.

How do you know when the time is right for your business to invest in mobile data and how do you quantify the benefits?

Mobile Data by itself will not help you to;

- ✗ Market your business
- ✗ Compete

But it will help you to;

- ✓ Take proactive actions
- ✓ Better understand your business
- ✓ Make better decisions
- ✓ Drive efficiencies into your business
- ✓ Drive compliance
- ✓ See what is going wrong in real time

If you **use the data to make a positive change in your business**, you will level the playing field with your competitors, or slope it in your favour if you are the first in your field to make effective use of the data.

## Is this your current scenario?

- Your resources are in the wrong place; they are held up at a customer, delivering when you need them to be collecting, loaned to another depot when you are busy at home?
- You don't meet promised delivery times?
- You find out that you haven't met a delivery time from your customer after the promised delivery time has passed?
- Your paperwork trail is onerous and time consuming
- You make key business decisions based on conflicting managers' opinions

- You don't know how much you are not billing your customer for?

These scenarios don't mean that you aren't running a successful business, but they do suggest that it could be even better.

### A vision for your future?

- If a linehaul vehicle is held up, you will be notified. Not only of that vehicle's delay, but also of the deliveries which will be affected – triggering automatic notification to all of those customers.
- You know the geography of your collections and you know the geography of your deliveries. You *also know* the difference in profitability of selling collections and deliveries in these areas, in comparison to targeting new areas. If that difference is 15% what is that information worth to you?
- You know that you have a problem with a specific driver or Distribution Centre manager, because you can see the figures. You have specific comparisons to other drivers or to the time before that manager took over and you can use it as a basis for a performance review

You deal in certainty. You promise your customers that you will deliver. If you can't deliver, you deliver timely information to enable them to plan around the arrival of that part, or that consignment. So much better than them calling you to tell you about it?

### Are you fighting the right fires?

With automated data capture, you no longer have to work from generic reports. Reports built after the event when all of the information has been collated, sorted and reconciled. Reports which are built to satisfy a key manager, but which don't really relate to the other managers who also have to rely on them.

If you could choose one report for each manager, each report would be different. The following list shows some of the key data available to you in next to real time. Which combination would you choose for **each of your management team** so they could make effective decisions?

1. Number of deliveries outstanding
2. Number of on time deliveries made today
3. Damages in your care
4. Undelivered units by time or reason
5. Un-reconciled manifests
6. Driving hours used or remaining
7. Available staff
8. Activity by depot
9. Depot performance comparison
10. Top 20 customers by value or volume

If you have a vision for your company, the fastest way to deliver it is to make changes based on facts not opinions. Data gives you knowledge. Knowledge ensures that you make the right decision to deliver your vision.

If you would like to know more about how this technology can help your company, or to share your experiences with us, please get in touch.

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