

Oak Harbor Freight's AI-Driven Future with Datafi

Situation

Oak Harbor Freight Lines, founded in 1916 and based in Auburn, WA, is a regional trucking carrier, providing comprehensive transportation and logistics solutions across the West Coast of North America.

A less-than-truckload (LTL) carrier, Oak Harbor has 41 terminals from which it handles some 7,500 shipments per day. To keep track of shipments, including on-time deliveries and pickups, damage claims and returns, as well as overtime, some 100 Oak Harbor managers and supervisors across its terminals would go to the company's legacy IBM AS400 to copy and paste data from various screens from the traditional green-screen terminals.



Manually pulling data from the screens to create daily reports took a lot of time and introduced the potential for errors. We needed to find a better solution, but as a mid-sized company we didn't have the budget for a major IT investment.

– Robert Rosales, Vice President, Information Technology at Oak Harbor Freight

Solution:

Three years ago, Oak Harbor Freight deployed Datafi, the AI-powered platform connects data from all sources across an organization's data landscape and provides an AI-powered Agent that transforms plain language questions into requests so employees can find the information they need, while Datafi enforces attribute-based granular security and data quality controls to ensure secure data access and data integrity.

After the initial installation, the solution was integrated with their existing business systems in a matter of hours. The data analytics team has used Datafi to integrate databases across teams after securing varying levels of sensitivity and integrity.

Oak Harbor Freight integrated Datafi with its data warehouse which aggregated structured data from its AS400. The company took advantage of Datafi's no-code application framework to create more than 20 line of business apps that were deployed throughout the company's Pickup and Deliver (P&D) Department, tracking some 50 different metrics. The business team describes the marginal effort of developing new applications with Datafi as "almost nothing", recognizing reduction in manual work because of Datafi.

Datafi enables Oak Harbor to save at least \$350,000 annually by avoiding software licensing costs, reducing staffing costs and saving human effort and time in development. Rosales says, "This is a great investment and it enables Oak Harbor in avoiding the cost of an entire programming team."

"Datafi has worked so well for our P&D department that we plan on rolling it out to at least another six departments," Rosales says. "We want to deploy Datafi to our Claims Department, our Fleet Maintenance Department, our Accounts Receivables, our Costing Department, Weights and Measures, our Inspection Department, Alliance Department, our Telematics, which is to say we see value in rolling out Datafi across our full organization."

Benefits:

Oak Harbor Freight Lines has enjoyed a number of benefits from deploying Datafi, including:

- No-code, immediate application development
- Gaining operational visibility for operational excellence
- Enhancing employee satisfaction and productivity
- Securely accessing data
- Providing a strong roadmap for the future
- Protecting Programmer Time
- Creating More Data Users

No-Code, Immediate Application Development

Oak Harbor Freight values the immediacy with which it can create no-code applications with Datafi.

"The reason we chose Datafi is the speed in which we can deliver new reports and custom applications," Rosales says. "All of our apps were created by one person, Jordan Fujioka, who isn't a programmer and isn't an engineer. He's our business analyst. That's the power of Datafi. You don't have to be a programmer to create valuable applications."

Rosales says a typical application development process would involve the business group creating a needs document, handing that over to the development team, fielding questions and concerns on the design, resubmitting, awaiting a first release, evaluating, and perhaps asking for changes.

“Working in Datafi I can create an app in 10 minutes that might otherwise take months or even a year or more to get from an internal development team,” Rosales says. “The immediacy of Datafi app development saves time, frustration, and enormous development costs.”

Fujioka says: “Datafi is a force multiplier.”

Gaining Operational Visibility for Operational Excellence

Datafi gives Oak Harbor Freight the visibility it needs to achieve operational excellence. Rosales refers to one of the Datafi apps they’ve created as the “Splash Screen,” which provides a quick view into operations, with the ability to dive deeper.

“Every morning I look at our splash screen and within 15 seconds I can digest how our operations are doing,” Rosales says. “It shows me how many shipments were picked up yesterday, and see the revenue. I can see yesterday’s revenue compared to last month, and compared to last year. I can see the same for shipments picked up, and the same for on-time delivery, claims, returns, and all the other metrics we track, and for any of these you can dig deeper.”

Datafi apps also show all the same on a corporate level, to see how one region compares with another.

Leadership uses these comparisons of operational status in real-time and with less direct support from business analysts or IT than previously required. District managers can now track inbound raw materials and outbound goods, better control labor cost, fuel spend, bill counts and freight deliveries in real-time. Keeping track of these items on separate platforms, or worse, manually, often led to time loss and inefficiency, both of which are avoided through use-case specific data apps.

“The visibility we gain from Datafi helps us improve our operational excellence,” Rosales says. “This helps us see variances in overtime and other expenses immediately—not a month later—so we can take immediate actions to control costs and increase efficiency. All of this helps our employees make better informed decisions.”

Enhancing Employee Satisfaction and Productivity

The ease with which users can access the information they need to succeed enhances employee satisfaction and productivity.

“We have a 100% adoption rate for Datafi because the benefits are so obvious,” Rosales says. “We no longer have to go from one AS400 screen to another, copy and paste data into a spreadsheet. With Datafi it is immediately available. This frees time and reduces frustration. It enhances employee satisfaction and productivity because it gives people the information they need to course correct when needed. Everything with LTL is about containing costs, and Datafi gives us the visibility to do that. Giving people the tools to achieve this generates a lot of personal satisfaction for all involved.

Securely Accessing Data

Datafi provides data governance capabilities across organizational units of Oak Harbor opening up direct data access opportunities. Datafi enables data owners to create specific data models and mask confidential fields facilitating easy and secured access with all the teams without compromising customer's sensitive information.

Datafi holds admin-defined data security, data quality, and governance requirements, including use of attribute-based access control security that stays with the data, providing granular security. Datafi evaluates each request against the policy to see which fields of data from which sources are required, and then validates whether the user has access to the specific data involved.

This tight security will be especially important as Oak Harbor Freight rolls out Datafi to additional business units. "For some data you might encounter Social Security numbers, personally identifiable information, or other sensitive data," Rosales says. "Datafi has very secure functionality that allows such fields to be securely hidden so that only the people that are supposed to have access to those data can see that data."

Strong Roadmap

Oak Harbor Freight values the strong working relationship it has developed with Datafi, and the roadmap the two companies are working on. The next step is deployment of an Knowledge agent to ingest bill of lading so that information can be immediately fed into the system and made available for real-time use.

"Datafi is helping us create a system that will allow our drivers to take a picture of a bill of lading and other documents that will be immediately transferred to our backend systems and made available to our Datafi apps," Rosales says. "This will allow us to more precisely assign trucks to docking bays to reduce cross-dock movements, will help us to optimize loads and deliveries, and will open the door for many more efficiencies."

Protecting Programmer Time

The ease with which Oak Harbor workers can create their own applications saves time for Business Analyst Fujioka, as well as for the company's developers.

"There was one person who loves data, but because of that was always asking me to create a new app for him,"

Fujioka says. ***"Now he can just do it himself with Datafi, and he enjoys doing it because he can create exactly what he wants."***

Datafi also protects the company's programmers from interruptions, as they tend to the code that keeps the company's IBM AS400 running efficiently.

"Our RPG programmers' time is extremely valuable," Fujioka says. "If we take them away to do anything other than consistently maintaining our current production system, we're probably doing something wrong. Datafi protects them from being asked to create applications."

Creating More Data Users

Oak Harbor sees the use of data percolating throughout its operations. Fujioka credits Datafi because of its ease of use, as well as its providing direct access to the raw data upon which reports are based.

“Because of Datafi we’re creating more data users all around,” Fujioka says. “The 70% who never used dashboards are now creating their own mini dashboards, and the 30% who were using dashboards are now diving deeper into the raw data because Datafi makes it so easy to do so. Tableau and Power BI are very similar in the sense that the end user doesn’t have easy access to the raw information at the same sort of granular level as they do with Datafi.”

About Datafi:

Datafi unlocks unified interfaced for enterprise data — changing how everyone can find and use the business information they need, regardless of where or how it is stored across the enterprise data ecosystem. Our AI-powered platform connects data from all sources, while our AI-powered Agent transforms plain language questions into requests that find the information needed, while enforcing granular security and data quality controls. We empower everyone, from entry-level to executive-level, with their own personalized AI Agent. Our AI Agent is context aware, intent aware, and user aware, becoming smarter with each use while eliminating unwanted hallucinations. Join Datafi customers, partners and solution providers already powering their business with AI. Learn more at datafi.co