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Swing Transport gains ground on profitability and operational efficiency with VIACHAIN trailer tracking

North Carolina-based transportation and logistics service provider Swing Transport has adopted VIACHAIN's trailer tracking solution—integrated with McLeod dispatch software—to improve fleet visibility, streamline operations and deliver better customer service.

The company

Swing Transport is a privately owned, full-service provider of transportation and logistics in Salisbury, North Carolina, operating a fleet of approximately 200 tractors and 1200 dry trailers. A regional contract carrier for companies like Georgia-Pacific and International Paper, Swing hauls dedicated freight across southeastern states, including North and South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Alabama.

The dry goods carrier specializes in service-intensive and time-sensitive freight, with 80% of loads requiring on-time pick-up and delivery services. Optimizing operational efficiency and maintaining customer service satisfaction are two of its top priorities.

The challenge

While some hauls are completed within a day, the nature of the operation requires a number of trailers to remain at customer locations for extended periods of time. Once trailers are left behind, there is no way for the carrier to monitor status and current location, according to Swing's Director of Operarions Tomme Gamewell.

"At any given time we may have 30 to 40 trailers sitting at customer depots, which makes it difficult to keep track of the fleet" says Gamewell. "To make matters worse, we identified instances in which customers were using trailers for storage rather than unloading and returning them because it was cheaper than renting

warehouse space. This practice definitely cut into our profitability as trailers stopped moving goods." In addition, trailers were getting misplaced or even stolen from unsecured customer lots.

Gamewell and his team needed a solution that would deliver complete visibility of their remote trailer operations, helping them streamline processes and reduce the number of missing assets. They also wanted a system that would help them communicate estimated arrival times to customers and quickly respond to unplanned situations such as mechanical issues in order to minimize delays.

The solution

"This was our first foray into this type of system," says Gamewell. "We had seen the value of a tracking system on some of our leased trucks, so we chose to work with VIACHAIN to help us implement a solution that would provide the same level of value for the rest of our fleet."

Swing selected VIACHAIN's trailer tracking solution, outfitting trailers with solar powered, dual-mode satellite-cellular IoT devices that enable comprehensive tracking for at least seven years with no battery replacements and minimal maintenance.

The devices communicate over cellular networks as well as VIACHAIN's proprietary global satellite service. Satellite allows Swing to maintain connectivity with its transport assets and drivers in remote areas and in the midst of harsh weather conditions or natural disasters that can compromise cellular infrastructure.

As a long-time user of McLeod dispatch software, Swing also appreciated that VIACHAIN's telematics solutions are fully integrated into the LoadMaster platform, making the deployment quick and easy. Swing's dispatchers quickly accessed actionable trailer data and reports right from the familiar LoadMaster interface, without having to learn a new application.

The solution reports trailer location, movement and status through a series of detailed reports and automatic alerts. "With this solution, we're able to set up geofences in customers' yards to monitor trailer activity and keep track of how long trailers remain at a specific location," says Gamewell. "With real-time and historical data on every single one of our assets, it's much easier to notice when something out of the ordinary occurs."

With access to comprehensive reports, Swing can pull a list of trailers that have been dwelling for a specific amount of time by location. Dwelling reports can even be automatically generated at the beginning of every work day to help dispatch set the order of the day and assign drivers to trailers that need to go back on the road. Furthermore, real-time location data and time-stamped breadcrumb reports help Swing accurately predict arrival times in order to fulfill service requirements.

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The results

Dan Summitt, President of Swing Transport, says, "VIACHAIN's cost-effective telematics solution is the best fit for our trailer tracking requirements based on its unique solar technology, integrated power capability and valuable data reporting features. The solution continues to improve our tractor-to-trailer ratios and streamline overall operations through increased visibility and real-time trailer data where and when we need it."

VIACHAIN's trailer tracking solution has helped the carrier realize many expected—and some unexpected—benefits. Trailer inventory reports have eliminated the need for drivers to do yard checks. Gamewell says "We can fully utilize our drivers on the road instead of in the yard, which increases the company's profitability and drivers' morale—it's a win-win." In addition to maximizing resource allocation, the company has been able to

reduce labor costs by eliminating the need for yard-check personnel. "Driver productivity has also significantly improved," says Gamewell, "as drivers no longer waste time driving around looking for trailers or getting dispatched to the wrong location."

Swing Transport has also significantly reduced trailer idle time. VIACHAIN's comprehensive reports provide the necessary information for the carrier to monitor trailer activity and utilization at each customer site, which in turn allows the company to better manage trailer pools and discourage the use of trailers as warehouse space.

Finally, and possibly most significantly, VIACHAIN's telematics solution has had a direct impact on trailer theft. "In 2015, a trailer that had gone missing for several days was located at a lot nearby," said Gamewell. "With trailer data from VIACHAIN, we tracked down the missing trailer, alerted the authorities, and built a case against a sizeable trailer theft operation in the city."

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