

Improved tracking and payment for perishables transportation system

Business Results

- Savings of \$80,000 annually in direct administration costs.
- Additional savings of \$30,000 due to reduce errors.
- Efficient loading, faster collection and timely feedback to suppliers.
- Faster pinpointing of sources of substandard quality.
- Timely and accurate supplier payment processing.



The Challenge – Automate collection, payment and quality information for perishables in food & beverage distribution system

Epic Data was called in to help automate and streamline the information system supporting the collection, supplier payment and quality monitoring of a perishable product in the Food & Beverage industry. The transportation and distribution system involves daily collection at 700 collection sites and twice-monthly payments to the suppliers.

Previously, truck drivers were responsible for the labor-intensive process of completing paper-based pickup slips and delivering them to the central processing office. Later, the product was tested for quality, and the drivers delivered the test reports back to the supplier about a week later.

“We ended up with many problems due to the sheer volume of daily data entry—missing or incorrect information or addition errors. A lot of administrative time was required to follow up each error by phone,” said a spokesperson for the organization. “We believed we could eliminate all the extra effort and costs involved in the system and gain the timeliness and accuracy to run the finance side more smoothly.”

The Solution – Time, mobile data collection network by Epic Data

Epic Data implemented a mobile data collection system that instantly reports details of the product pickup back to the central processing office saving drivers time and eliminating delays and opportunities for error in receipt of information.

Drivers use handheld wireless scanning units to scan the unique barcode for the pickup location and enter data regarding the volume and processing conditions for the product. Drivers print out and provide receipt

slips immediately, which suppliers can use to match against later payments. Drivers also collect quality-related processing and storage information, which is later combined with product test results.

Further, the handheld units monitor cargo load and available capacity, advising drivers how to split and balance the load.

Upon delivery to the central processor, the handheld unit automatically records the delivered amount and transmits the entire route's collected data to the central computer. Paper records can be printed if necessary.

The distribution system benefits from the Epic Data system in the following ways:

- **Faster pickups:** Drivers have less paperwork, and don't have to manually enter data or calculate available capacity.
- **Faster, lower cost daily collection reports:** The report that used to take 3-4 days to collect, enter and produce is now available within minutes of the end of a shift, saving the organization \$80,000-\$100,000 annually in courier and direct administrative costs.
- **Fewer errors:** With fewer paper slips, miscalculations, missing paperwork and data re-entry, there are fewer opportunities for error. The organization realized an additional savings of \$30,000 each year from eliminating the need to follow-up on errors.
- **Streamlined payment.** All information required to produce accurate, timely payment is readily available—without the last minute panic.
- **Faster quality reporting:** Time delays in quality reporting of the perishable product are minimized. Should there be substandard product; the barcoding system identifies the supplier and lot number. Test results are used to help determine where in the supply chain the problem originated.

The Epic Data system was implemented cost-effectively, employing the local cellular data network for the wireless communications. Drivers transmit collection data with a simple press of the 'Send' button. If the cell network is inaccessible or down, data is stored on the handheld unit until it reconnects with the network. Epic Data's system also manages and synchronizes all incoming data, provides error logs and allows the organization to monitor incoming data in real-time.

"It's an excellent system," the organization's spokesperson says. "Each morning, the system can accurately report on everything shipped the previous day. There are no more delays, and the accuracy is vital to us. With our tight timelines, it improves our ability to report and manage the distribution system properly, and that's worth a lot more to us."

ABOUT EPIC DATA

Epic Data is a trusted provider of Manufacturing Operations and Warehouse Management Solutions to the world's most progressive discrete manufacturers. We focus on knowing what is important to our customers and delivering solutions that last, resulting in relationships that have spanned over three decades.

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