

News

The Latest in Trailer Tracking

Heavy Duty Trucking

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By Diana Britton, Managing Editor

About a year and a half ago, Kraft Foods' private fleet was experiencing considerable trailer detention and needed to get more control of its trailers. "As a private fleet, we thought we knew pretty well where our equipment was and how many trailers that we needed to serve our business," says Scott Willert, senior manager for private and dedicated fleets at Kraft. But then Kraft installed SkyBitz's Global Locating System technology for positional trailer tracking.

"Once we started using SkyBitz, we were able to start telling our locations that were asking for more trailers, how many trailers they had and how long they had been there," Willert says.

In less than 12 months, Kraft reduced its trailer pool by 25 percent. "The increased visibility and communication opened people's eyes and helped change behaviors almost immediately," he says. "At the same time, we've been able to serve more of our companies' loads because we know more about the availability of our assets."

SkyBitz: Three types of solutions are offered by SkyBitz as part of its tracking platform. The core of this platform is SkyBitz's GLS system, a two-way communication, satellite-based technology, that can run for three to five years on eight AA lithium batteries, says Craig Montgomery, senior vice president of marketing and business development. The device doesn't use a GPS chip, which often makes devices power hungry.

The GLS, packaged in a low-profile, weatherproof polycarbonate housing, sends pieces of information from a satellite infrastructure to SkyBitz's servers. The calculations are made on these servers, and the data are then sent to the customer via SkyBitz's Web service, SkyBitz InSight, where users have access to up to 50 reports and maps.

The company has also been working on a GSM terrestrial-based device through a partnership with U.K.-based QinetiQ, a defense technology and security company. This device is designed for flatbeds and high-value cargo where fleets need a high level of reporting.

For fleets that don't need a high level of control and reporting, SkyBitz also offers a one-way satellite device, which uses GPS and RF technologies.

SkyBitz's Montgomery says customers typically reduce their tractor to trailer ratio by 14 percent, and some by up to 25 percent. With trailer tracking, you don't have to have extra trailers lying around as slack, and you can better prepare for shipments and deliveries, he adds.

Improving the tractor to trailer ratio by 10 percent can save a company \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year, according to Complete Innovations.

"Trailers full of valuable goods are often stolen and emptied in a few hours," says Todd Felker, executive vice president of marketing and product development for I.D. Systems.

If a trailer is stolen, the fleet has to deal with the customer, insurance claims and buying a new trailer, all of which add up quickly, says SkyBitz's Montgomery. With SkyBitz's system, if the trailer is moving where and when it shouldn't be, the fleet can communicate with the authorities, who can intercept the trailer and see where it's going. Aside from its trailer tracking devices, SkyBitz also offers a door sensor, which can sense when and where the trailer door is open.

SkyBitz provides sensors including those for fuel tank, door, tire pressure and tank pressure, to name a few.

As these advanced sensors become more prevalent and commercialized in the marketplace, fleets will have the opportunity to go beyond just knowing where their trailers are physically; they'll be able to keep tabs on the conditions that matter to their particular operation and application.

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