

Case study

## Averitt Express

Mobile Computers  
Deliver the Goods  
for Averitt Express



At a glance

Industry: Transportation and Logistics

Application: Dispatch

### Intermec's mobile computers, with integrated wide area wireless radios, keep dispatch in touch with drivers throughout the day

With a touch on the display of his Intermec mobile computer, the Averitt Express driver sent a message back to dispatch. The message, sent over the wide area wireless network, confirmed he had just delivered six packages to a customer, updating the dispatcher's screen and Averitt's customer service database in the process.

Less-than-truckload (LTL) trucking companies such as Averitt, are finding a business advantage in using automated data collection and mobile computing systems. In Charlotte, North Carolina, Averitt installed 40 mobile computers from Intermec Technologies Corporation and a Synergy Dispatch software program from Synergistic Systems, an Intermec business partner. It's been paying off in dollars and cents, and in improved customer satisfaction ever since.

#### Challenge

Until 1997, Averitt Express, an LTL common carrier with nearly 30 years of experience, had used two-way voice radio between the dispatch and driver, and manual processes for recording deliveries and pickups. The company then began automating operations

for pickup calls, wireless dispatch, delivery planning, and outbound linehaul planning in their Jacksonville, Florida and Charlotte, North Carolina service centers.

"We decided that we needed to automate the routes for many reasons," said Ron Davis, operations manager of Averitt in Charlotte. "The overriding reason was to improve customer service," he added.

Dispatch was getting bombarded with calls from customers asking about the status of shipments, not allowing dispatch enough time to carefully plan the driver's day. Drivers were putting on many additional miles by retracing their routes. They had to use voice radio, which is often busy, to call into dispatch to get information about the next pickups. The unloading and loading of shipments required experienced workers who knew the system well.

"We felt like we had reached our plateau with the old system. We knew if we wanted to improve our company, we needed to eliminate those situations and take the next step by automating," said Davis.



"Our system is so efficient now. We could have someone start on our dock today who has never been on a freight dock before and understand what to do with that shipment. We are beginning to see favorable results," Davis added.

### Solution

"The Synergy Dispatch is the software that takes customer pickup calls and handles these orders from beginning to end," said Lee Wintrode of Synergistic Systems. "It does everything from assigning calls to drivers to planning the delivery route." The RF mobile data component of Synergy Dispatch runs on Intermec's 6100 system. "We like to work with the Intermec product line," said Wintrode. "The pen-based computers are user-friendly and durable, which is why they work so well for Averitt."

Intermec's mobile computers allow Averitt to provide fast, accurate information on the status of a customer's shipment – which is essential. With 77 service centers in 17 states and service areas blanketing the South, Averitt provides national service including Puerto Rico and international coverage to Canada and beyond.

Averitt continues to grow and strives to be as customer driven as possible, priding itself on being the carrier of choice. When the driver enters information on the mobile computer, it is sent to a Synergy Dispatch server at the local Averitt service center, as well as the central AS/400™ computer in Cookeville, Tennessee. By automatically updating the host computers in Cookeville, the corporate headquarters, all Averitt service centers have real-time access to the drivers' stop information.

### Outcome

Now, when a customer inquires about a shipment, Averitt can immediately give the

delivery time and the name of the person who signed for the shipment. If the freight is still on the route but not delivered, Averitt can query the driver, via wide area wireless communication, as to the expected delivery time. The system can also instantly communicate pickup and delivery times, travel times on the route, preliminary billing information and other customer data.

The results are substantial time savings and better customer service. Averitt is expecting a 70 to 85 percent reduction in telephone traffic in the dispatch office, allowing more time to plan the driver's workday. The result is better load quality and reduced loading time.

Inbound planning is another way the system pays. The inbound planning software builds routes that minimize driving time and keep deliveries in tight geographic areas so that the driver can make more deliveries per hour. The 6100 mobile computers are loaded with the delivery route information so they know the route sequence to follow and the location of each stop.

"By staying in touch with dispatch all throughout the day, I'm able to get pickups earlier than if I had to call in on the phone. I'd drive right by a pickup site because I wouldn't know we had a pickup there until I called in," said Scott Crocker, city driver/salesman. "The system saves me a lot of backhaul miles and a lot of time," he continued. The condensed delivery area enables more stops each day for drivers, which generates added revenue.

Cross-dock efficiency has also been enhanced. The Charlotte location receives shipments from all over the country destined for any given route. Those shipments are automatically routed by Synergy Dispatch and are sequence

loaded. "When we open the trailer, we no longer need to pick through other freight to find the correct shipment. We know where it is within a few feet," says Davis. The sequencing of freight also permits Averitt to handle freight only once.

### The Process Continues for Averitt

With inbound planning up and running, and dispatchers and drivers easily adapting to the training and use of the system, Averitt has moved on to phase three of implementation—outbound planning. "Outbound is going to be the biggest payback as we see it," says Davis. "We have the ability to have a better load quality, a better load plan simply by knowing well in advance what the driver has picked up prior to his ever returning to the service center."

There are other options that Averitt has the ability to implement. One option is signature capture on the Intermec mobile computers, which will allow customers to sign right on the screen and send that signature directly to the host computer. Another is using satellite communication for any rural routes that are out of the range of mobile coverage. Averitt is still researching these options.

As more Averitt locations are automated and take full advantage of the system's options, the company sees much growth potential. Being a people-based company, Averitt Express will do anything to better serve its customers. "Our customers simply want to know where their freight is and if it will arrive on time to its destination," says Davis. "The system from Intermec is the communication tool that allows us to answer these common customer questions. We can now serve our customers efficiently." And that's the bottom line for Averitt Express.

#### North America

##### Corporate Headquarters

6001 36th Avenue West  
Everett, Washington 98203  
Phone: (425) 348-2600  
Fax: (425) 355-9551

##### South America & Mexico Headquarters Office

Newport Beach, California  
Phone: (949) 955-0785  
Fax: (949) 756-8782

#### Europe/Middle East &

##### Africa Headquarters Office

Reading, United Kingdom  
Phone: +44 118 923 0800  
Fax: +44 118 923 0801

#### Asia Pacific

Headquarters Office  
Singapore  
Phone: +65 6303 2100  
Fax: +65 6303 2199

#### Internet

www.intermec.com  
Worldwide Locations:  
www.intermec.com/locations

#### Sales

Toll Free NA: (800) 934-3163  
Toll in NA : (425) 348-2726  
Freephone ROW: 00 800 4488 8844  
Toll ROW : +44 134 435 0296

#### OEM Sales

Phone: (425) 348-2762

#### Media Sales

Phone: (513) 874-5882

#### Customer Service and Support

Toll Free NA: (800) 755-5505  
Toll in NA : (425) 356-1799

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