

Case Study: Tasrail

Tasrail on track with TBO eLogistics

Background

Tasrail own and operate the Tasmanian railway network. They transport around 3.5 million tonnes of freight per year including coal, minerals, cement, containers, logs, sawn timber, fertilizer and vegetables.

Since November 1997, when Tasrail was launched (with North American Wisconsin Central as a major shareholder), it trebled its turnover and become efficient, profitable and prosperous. Contributing to that efficiency has been the adoption of TBO Logistics as an e-commerce vehicle to improving cargo handling, tracking and customer service.

e-Commerce drivers

Michael Ward, Tasrail's marketing manager mentions,

"We perceived a problem with the data interface we have with our customers... and more particularly, the timely arrival of information. When I looked at it more closely, I could see that our customers were printing a piece of information from their computer, then faxing it to us, and we are paying someone to re-enter that information. It all seemed, quite frankly, very foolish to me."

Michael knew of a solution to this problem during his time working in the New Zealand transport industry, and approached Tasmania Business Online for assistance.



The solution

Tasrail has an ethos of achieving ongoing gains through increased efficiency, and it's against this backdrop that TBO Logistics was engaged to drive efficiency into the process.

Prior to implementing the system, freight data was entered many hours after each train's departure. Now, through the inflow of data from customers, a manifest and journey plan is produced before trains depart. Michael gives it his seal of approval,

"It's been a godsend to us. The beauty of the technology is that it works invisibly, yet we know from customer feedback that what we are doing to improve efficiency is well appreciated."

Business benefits

In addition to the enhanced customer service mentioned above, TBO Logistics has enabled Tasrail to eliminate the expense of extra staff and reduced overtime in its Customer Service Centre (CSC) by 70%.

Tasrail receives its information faster and with more accuracy reducing the number of faxes, phone calls and photocopying.

"We are about continuous improvement, adding value to the relationship with our customers. That's what the whole thing is about. The big ones want us to give them delivery information that links back to them electronically. We are now achieving that."

Michael Ward

Challenges

"Literally there have been none. We have had all but two of the companies we wanted on board since June 2001; and apart from some minor difficulties with the integrity of the data entered, there have been no problems at all."

Michael Ward

The future

What has been achieved with a select group of customers is only the first step for Tasrail. It has intentions of introducing electronic recording of all freight movements over time.

Information would be scanned or pre-entered so Tasrail would receive the information as trains are made up (rather than afterwards!). Additionally, all trading partners will know precisely what is in transit. Tasrail is considering live entry of data for its trains, so that logistics decisions can be made before trains reach critical points within the rail network where trains are split for distribution of goods into differing areas

TBO Logistics

TBO Logistics provides Transport Providers and Shippers with accurate consignment information to help manage transport relationships. Armed with a wealth of information, transport users can make more informed decisions regarding their shipping activity.

TBO Logistics performs a clearing-house functionality allowing the server-based application to:

- Integrate with e-commerce platforms via a messaging interface; allowing seamless two-way flow of the transport/logistics information;
- Link existing systems of participating transport companies so that Consignments and transport bookings can be automated;
- Allow transport companies without an existing Freight Management system to access TBO's consignment management functionality via a server-based application;
- Link the status systems of carriers to provide a one-stop-shop for status enquiries; avoiding the need to interrogate many systems; and
- Generate logs enabling automated payment and reporting on transaction performance.

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