TRANSPORTATION COMPANIES
PUT TABLETS TO THE TEST

Frost & Sullivan research shows that the applications and devices that employees are using to do their jobs are increasingly designed to support a remote and virtual workforce. This is good news for companies in the transportation industry, since so many of their employees work outside a traditional office, be they drivers, pilots, mechanics, customer service personnel or in-field managers. Among the companies that routinely deploy tablets for their mobile workers, almost two-thirds say the devices are "highly effective" for their business.

Frost & Sullivan research shows that the tablet market is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the mobile-computing market, with tens of millions of tablets being shipped every year. That growth owes a lot to advancements in touchscreen technologies, processing power, mobile operating systems, and software visualization tools, as well as support for business applications like customer relationship management (CRM), workforce management (WFM), contact center, point-of-sale, and more.

When workers can connect to back-office and other enterprise applications on a tablet device, they maintain their mobility without sacrificing productivity—a key driver for C-level executives in today's increasingly global business environment. A Frost & Sullivan survey of 300 North American decision-makers who were responsible for purchasing mobile software applications reveals that in 2014, 84% of respondents deployed at least one mobile worker app; almost half have implemented as many as 10 such applications.

Transportation organizations are using tablets loaded with business-critical applications to not only improve basic communications, but to change the way their employees do business. While the hard-dollar ROI impacts on labor and transportation expenses are still ranked highly, the increased emphasis on softer benefits signals a more sophisticated level of user expectations. These soft impacts may be less quantifiable but are strongly ranked and include improved competitive advantage, enhanced customer engagement, and increased customer satisfaction.

Ruggedized tablets are a great option for transportation industry personnel. Water- and shock-resistant, these devices are meant to perform in challenging conditions. Features like all-day battery life and special styluses designed to be used with gloves on make them ideal for in-field deployment.

Traffic and Staffing Management Transportation managers can use tablets on the road and at pick-up and drop-off sites, as well as in airports, terminals and street stops, to understand travel and rider patterns in real time. They can then use integrated WFM software to quickly update conditions in light of weather, traffic, holidays, special events and other unusual patterns. GPS and other location-based capabilities make tablets especially valuable for a market whose entire business is based on movement between one location and the next.

Customer Service By making it easy to track a driver's location via GPS, tablets let drivers instantly update route reporting, estimated delivery times, and arrival/delivery confirmation. They can also use tablets to get customer signatures where needed, and to update supply-chain management and inventory applications in real time.

Vehicle Service Fleet managers can service and repair cars, trains, buses, airplanes and other equipment from any location, using tablets to aid in the process. They can access repair logs and other software applications and services used by the organization to scan VIN numbers, track maintenance, update all necessary information in real time, and complete their time-management systems when they're done. They can even use the devices to record video on site, allowing other employees, managers and executives to see what they did and benefit from the results downstream.

In-Route Transactions Transportation and logistics companies are deploying tablets to replace specially designed endpoints, since tablet operating systems offer better support for business applications and services. As a result, they are finding new ways to interact with customers. Forward-thinking cities are putting tablets into buses and light-rail cars, allowing passengers to pay using a credit card or monthly/weekly pass with a single swipe, as well as check route and schedule information while in transit. Logistics and shipping firms are giving them to packers and drivers, allowing them to scan barcode information and have it input directly into their back-end systems. Flight attendants can use tablets to process payments and track on-board inventory all at once.

Digital Manuals Transportation companies are using tablets to replace paper-based manuals, which often run hundreds of pages, are costly to print and ship, and are out of date almost as soon as they are published. Flight attendants, pilots, mechanics and drivers all benefit from having a light-weight mobile device that can update instantly, leverage video as needed, and link to other apps like scheduling and customer service. The companies that deploy them can save hundreds of thousands of dollars on shipping costs and fuel alone.

Transportation managers must find new ways to improve business processes, speed decision-making, increase customer satisfaction, and drive revenues from all areas of the organization. Companies of all sizes can benefit from tablets, and the apps and services they support. In the process, they can expect to save time, travel and money, while increasing productivity and customer satisfaction.

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