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NEW TABLE STAKES IN TRUCKING: OPTIMIZING FLEETS WITH MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

A Frost & Sullivan Virtual Think Tank

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INTRODUCTION

Today's fleets are facing pressure on multiple fronts. Management teams must expertly address a number of business requirements to lead in this area, including:

- Optimizing driver safety and retention.
- Enhancing operational efficiency.
- Protecting profit margins.
- Satisfying customer requirements.
- Complying with government mandates.

The pressure is on fleets to not just survive, but to thrive—and leaders in this space look to mobile technology as a key way to build intelligent, efficient, and scalable fleets that exceed requirements and expedite their organizations' digital transformation process.

Frost & Sullivan, a growth partnership company, recently gathered thought leaders from across the trucking industry to participate in a Virtual Think Tank discussion about the solutions they're implementing, the challenges they're neutralizing, and the lessons they're learning along the way. Here we present the most important takeaways. Businesses should benchmark against these shared insights and use this summary to strategize, navigate change, and improve performance.

“Mobile technology is going to evolve. It's going to change. There's going to be new things coming down the road literally every week.”
– David Solomonraj, Director of Transportation and Logistics
Vertical, Samsung



MOBILE TECHNOLOGY – A CONSTANTLY EVOLVING SET OF CHOICES AND CHALLENGES

Mobile technology has been a critical success factor in the fleet industry for decades. While originally designed as proprietary, satellite-based solutions available only to large organizations with deep pockets, the introduction of faster cellular data networks, GPS locationing, and powerful smartphones and tablets helped make mobilization available and affordable to fleets of every size.

Thought leaders are utilizing today's mobile technology in multiple and varied ways. Examples include:

- Enabling ELD (electronic logging device) solutions.
- Providing near-real-time navigation, mapping, geofencing and dynamic routing.
- Moving regulated information and reports from paper to the mobile device.
- Monitoring vehicle performance and maintenance.
- Tracking shipments.
- Implementing video safety solutions.
- Enriching driver communications tools.

“We are now at the point where we're almost 100% GPS-tracked from start to finish.” – Mark Quintana, Director of Road Feeder Services, Polar Air Cargo

Mobility is a dynamic category that demands ongoing attention and strategic thinking from fleet executives. Challenges that our thought leaders continue to face include:

Transitioning from older legacy systems: Upgrading mobile capabilities often impacts a fleet's legacy systems, and managing the transition wisely means taking the time to implement a thorough review of those legacy solutions to identify what should be migrated, updated or replaced. While providing high value, these reviews can be lengthy and complex when handled entirely by internal staff.

Managing devices: The mobile device lifecycle must be actively planned and managed from provisioning through retirement, and companies are discovering that it takes a highly specialized skill set to do so. Issues currently keeping executives up at night include planning the transition to a single-device environment, deciding on an assigned versus pool usage model, and anticipating 5G impacts. Justifying today's shorter device lifecycle to upper management is also an intensifying concern.

Leveraging data in new and better ways: The volumes of data collected by today's systems are increasingly being leveraged to improve workflows and optimize results. AI and machine learning are providing more predictive assistance and cost savings.

Improving the customer interface: Customers are becoming more demanding, and leaders are looking for ways to interface more effectively with them. Websites and portals have become table stakes. APIs enable larger customers; however, smaller clients without API expertise are at a disadvantage.

Thinking beyond just the in-cab experience: When choosing mobile solutions, thinking only about in-cab can result in a siloed, limited capability. Mobile technology not only enriches the in-cab experience for pick-up and delivery, but it is also just as critical for both forklift and yard truck operations, communications, and flow.

Dealing with the unforeseen: The COVID-19 pandemic has required heightened agility on the part of fleet organizations, and one firm found that its previous investment in a paperless delivery process and hands-free delivery is making the drivers and their customers safer and more comfortable.

However, some new mobile technology rollouts have been put on hold, and those organizations are turning the delay into their advantage. In one case, the fleet team is streamlining processes, further improving its beta solution, and planning to save even more money as a result.

Integration, integration, integration: A typical fleet ecosystem encompasses multiple systems, multiple partners, and customers with different technology requirements. If each solution functions in isolation and is unable to communicate and share data, it is of minimal value. Leaders recognize the need for a unified approach and an architecture that makes that possible.

“There’s a whole list of products that we’re looking at for our vehicles. One of the challenges is that each one’s a standalone. How do we develop a system to communicate and store the data and use that data going forward?”— James Cade, VP Fleet Services, Ruan Transportation



PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

In addition to dealing with the challenges listed above, a final issue called out by the thought leadership group was the lack of internal expertise regarding mobile technology and the accompanying inability to plan, deploy and manage optimal, integrated solutions.

Outside partnerships are crucial to successful implementations and filling these knowledge voids, especially when the partner brings the following to the table:

- Stability and reliability.
- Flexibility and agility.
- Fast time to market.
- Shared culture and business principles.

Leaders recognize that choosing partners can be more art than science; however, team chemistry and shared expectations are increasingly valued.

“The chemistry of the talent the partners bring is a big deal. It’s a big, big part of firing up people’s imaginations and people’s ability to bring good ideas forward.” – Charlie Prickett, President & COO, AAA Cooper Transportation

Additional important partner selection considerations focus on their industry expertise—specifically around their roadmap support, ability to support new devices and OS upgrades as part of the total solution, and willingness to commit to R&D as a true partner.

LESSONS LEARNED

In addition to a careful selection of outside partners, our thought leaders highlight the following best practices to integrate and implement with your partner to optimize mobile technology successfully:

Keep what works: When it comes to determining the value of current legacy software and hardware, do not automatically assume it is all useless. New is not necessarily better. Take the time to evaluate capabilities carefully, and then determine value before deciding what still works and what does not.

Build in flexibility: As the COVID crisis has demonstrated, building flexibility into your solution and planning helps you adapt quickly, confidently, and correctly to unforeseen circumstances.

“In these uncertain times, flexibility becomes key.” – Howard Cochran, Senior Director Strategic Technologies, Estes Express

Value your users: Treat users as the key stakeholders they are. Ensure that they are involved in your product evaluation process. And don't forget to determine how you will support your driver when a tech emergency brings things to a screeching halt, such as when a truck's tablet or PC goes down.

Leverage pilots: Thoughtful, intentional pilot design is key to solution success and worker adoption.

“Where you pilot. How you pilot. The scope of the pilot. Make sure you don't get in a hurry and trivialize what your pilot consists of.” – Woody Lovelace, Chief Information Officer, Southeastern Freight Lines

Don't forget ongoing costs: Remember ongoing costs when putting together a solution strategy and calculating expenses. TCO includes upfront costs and recurring cost items, such as maintenance management.

Future-proof your plans: Mobile technology is a dynamic product category. It will evolve and change and introduce new capabilities constantly. Successful fleet organizations look ahead and plan accordingly. For example, do you have your plans for 5G in place?

“Dealing with mobile technology in a moving fleet is a whole different animal. Staff your team for the long haul. And harness the mobile data to optimize your business.” – Shelly Moore, VP ITIO, YRCW

FINAL THOUGHTS

Final takeaways can be summarized as follows:

- Mobile technology is critical to fleet success.
- Challenges around mobilization require a varied skill set to address.
- A carefully selected mobility partner can bring much-needed expertise to the table, improving and expediting solution implementation.
- Flexibility, future-proofing, and valuing users help optimize mobile fleet offerings.

“Be flexible in your transformation goals, knowing what is mission-critical versus nice-to-have. Being able to quickly adapt to changing business conditions and deliver value is key.” – Tom Baughman, EVP Technology, Kenan Advantage Group

NEXT STEPS

- ① **Schedule a meeting with our global team** to experience our thought leadership and to integrate your ideas, opportunities and challenges into the discussion.
- ② Interested in learning more about the topics covered in this white paper? Call us at 877.GoFrost and reference the paper you're interested in. We'll have an analyst get in touch with you.
- ③ Visit our **Digital Transformation** web page.
- ④ Attend one of our **Growth Innovation & Leadership (GIL)** events to unearth hidden growth opportunities.

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