



Case study

HAULAGE FIRM POTTHAST & DÖRING: “WE’VE PUT OUR FAITH IN TELEMATICS!”



Various reasons prompted Hartmut Döring, managing director of Potthast & Döring, a medium-sized haulage company based in Paderborn, Germany, to opt for a telematics and fleet management system at the end of 1999. He is planning to expand the company's current network of branches in Germany, England and Hungary to include additional branches in Poland, Romania and the Ukraine. He sought a new telematics solution to help

optimise the deployment of his fleet of vehicles in Germany and abroad and to ensure the faster and fully integrated handling of orders, from initial acceptance of the order through to invoicing and cost finding. As a result, he hoped to achieve a marked reduction in operating costs, as well as increased transparency and service quality for his customers, 70% of whom come from the car manufacturing and component supply industry. His first step, however, entailed finding the right system and convincing his somewhat sceptical employees of the benefits offered by the new technology.

In his search for a “panacea” ...

Hartmut Döring had very concrete ideas about his ideal telematics solution. It was to be an open and expandable system, adaptable to changing company, customer and market requirements, with reliable, user-friendly and robust hardware - and all this at good value for money. He finally opted for the “logiweb” logistics portal, a telematics solution from gedas telematics, in combination with an ICA 2004 series vehicle terminal from vehicle computer manufacture Aplicom. Following in-depth instruction and training of his 91 employees, the software was installed and the first 14 vehicles were fitted with telematics terminals in the spring of 2004. After a successful test phase, Hartmut Döring decided to fit out his 60 vehicles with the new system by mid-2002. Integration of the freight forwarding software at “Potthast & Döring” was carried out in the middle of the year.

“logiweb” logistics portal: Solution for satellite- and internet-based fleet management

The “logiweb” logistics portal developed by gedas telematics ensures that the drivers can be reached throughout Europe via the Short Message System (SMS), in order to cover the entire logistics process from placement of the order to consignment tracking. logiweb can be used at any time, anywhere in the world, via the internet. In addition to ongoing consignment tracking, the key data for all vehicles are recorded in the system together with the appurtenant operational and stationary times and can be called up from any workstation together with consumption data. A standard PC and internet access are all that is required. The system solution guarantees Potthast & Döring optimum combined operation of the hardware and telematics software with the cellular network for data transmission, resulting in crucial competitive advantages.

Aplicom: Mobile data communications in the vehicle sector

With regard to hardware, Potthast & Döring opted for a complete vehicle terminal consisting of an Aplicom vehicle computer with GPS module and GSM unit, an expanded supplementary memory, a backlit LCD display and a keypad for data entry. The external and mobile workstation, which is connected to the internal operating system, offers all key functions in the area of text transmission, status messages, automatic location and vehicle alarm functions. Additional external devices, such as a barcode reader, are simple to connect. The compact design and clearly arranged connection terminals enable fast and simple installation inside the vehicle. Car and computer enthusiast Henning Wende, workshop manager at Potthast & Döring, is responsible for installing the devices. He proudly reveals that he can now manage this task in around three hours. His freight manager, Meinolf Merschmann, describes him as “simply indispensable”. The fact that he also supports the company's drivers with help and advice has been instrumental in dispelling the initial uncertainty and scepticism about the new technology.

The bold move is already paying off

According to managing director Döring, the new system has lived up to expectations. Close cooperation between the system partners and customers enabled the installation process to be carried out without interfering with day-to-day operations. A marked reduction in costs was already to be observed in the test phase. Above all, a 20 % reduction in the high monthly telephone costs was achieved. It is assumed that a further reduction will ensue after fitting out all the vehicles with the new technology. Standing times have been cut as a result of more efficient fleet management combined with more flexible planning. In contrast, only minimal scope for optimisation remains with regard to empty runs, as the vehicles are already operating to over 90% capacity. With regard to the investment in the new telematics system, which amounts to 129 euros per vehicle per month for hardware and services under the terms of a leasing agreement with gedas telematics, Hartmut Döring expects to break even within the next three to four years.

Optimisation of the work process

Freight manager Merschmann sees a substantial improvement in the area of operations management. Whereas the operations managers used to spend most of their time on the telephone, electronic data transmission has now led to a marked reduction in the workload relating to the transmission of information. The incidence of errors, particularly in handling orders abroad, has also fallen considerably. Fully integrated order handling and evaluation of all order- and vehicle-related data is now also possible, resulting in turn in optimum maintenance of the vehicles. It remains to be seen whether vehicle location and alarm protection actually offer additional protection from theft, but he adds with a wink that it would certainly be worth raising the question of a special bonus with the insurance companies.



Improved services for the customer

In addition to reduced costs, the two managers also see the new system as offering potential for improved customer services. They are currently working with gedas on setting up an internet access facility for customers. The introduction of an online tracking and tracing system and the scanning-in of bar codes will then enable continuous consignment tracking from the consignor to the consignee in the general cargo area. In Hartmut Döring's experience, key accounts in particular expect the company to demonstrate continuous improvement in the field of quality management in its capacity as a logistical partner. In addition to certification in accordance with DIN EN ISO 9002, the deployment of a telematics system has also already proven an additional competitive advantage in tenders and in canvassing for new business. In keeping with the motto "It's better to be among the front runners than to find yourself lost by the wayside", Potthast & Döring has opted to invest in the new telematics services as a means of safeguarding its future viability.

The Aplicom company

Aplicom Oy is one of the leading European manufacturers of professional IT systems in the vehicle segment. The Finland-based company develops, produces and markets vehicle computers and vehicle terminals. It supports integration of the vehicles into a company's or organisation's operating and information system. Over 90 per cent of its total output is exported for distribution by the system and distribution partners in the respective countries.

Aplicom's target groups and end customers include companies, organisations and authorities with their own fleets of vehicles, e.g. ADAC and the automobile clubs in Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands, the Norwegian postal service, the ambulance service in Great Britain and haulage firms such as Schenker or Hungarocamion. DaimlerChrysler also uses Aplicom vehicle computers within its FleetBoard system. Aplicom's research and development department and production facilities are located at the company's headquarters in Äänekoski, central Finland. Marketing and sales are managed from Helsinki. The company has a workforce of 45.