



FUELLING COMPANY GROWTH

RIBBLE FUEL OILS CASE STUDY

Ribble Fuel Oils is one of the top fuel distributors in the UK. Based in Preston, Lancashire, they deliver highly competitive fuel distribution solutions to the North West of England. Their customer base includes all domestic, horticultural, commercial heating, commercial fuels and fuel card applications.

Ribble Fuel Oils are driven by a motivation to be a leader in the fuel and lubricant distribution market, Operating a fleet of 20 tankers, they have the flexibility to support deliveries of varying sizes from 500 litres up to 36,000 litres. By working in partnership with their suppliers and customers they pride themselves on delivering an unparalleled level of customer support.

ENHANCING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The fuel distribution system at Ribble Fuel Oils is fundamental in maintaining their high levels of customer service. Their previous IT system had served the company well for a number of years, but did not provide the flexibility to support future company growth. As a result, Ribble Fuel Oils were looking to source a new system to optimise the entire fuel delivery process.

THE SOLUTION

Designed specifically for the heating oil sector, Ribble Fuel Oils selected a new Proof of Delivery (P.O.D) system by TouchStar Technologies. The core of TouchStar's system is P.O.D. software that is designed to manage the entire process from loading to delivering, confirming and invoicing.

The system utilises ATEX certified in-cab computers which fulfilled Ribble Fuel Oil's requirement for a device with a large driver friendly touch screen. The in-cab computers were ideal for Ribble Fuel Oils operation as they provided a robust link between the vehicle and FuelSoft back office system. Mark McCaffery, Finance Director comments, "Part of the process of selecting the new software was the interaction of the software with the trucks. We had a requirement for a back office system and hardware and were concerned that the communication infrastructure between the two would be cost prohibitive. The communication between the FuelSoft back office and TouchStar hardware was already proven so it made sense to move forward with this solution".

Ian Macmillan, Fuel Director for Ribble Fuel Oils continues, "The benefit of the new system was that it allows us to provide a single and enhanced means of communication between ourselves and the driver. Now, not only do we have an efficient way of communicating to the driver, but we have the ability to receive communication back in real time which was not possible with a manual paper based system".

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOLUTION

A planned go live date was set for September following the system selection in May 2014. Ribble Fuel Oils worked in partnership with TouchStar and FuelSoft to ensure that delivery date was achieved. Transport Manager, Colin Nicholls leader of the new system implementation explains, "Considering this was a brand new system for us, we were very impressed with how smoothly it went when the system went live. This was helped significantly by the comprehensive induction that took place at TouchStar's head office in Manchester enabling the drivers to fully buy into the new system".



HOW IT WORKS

PRE-SHIFT

Sales orders are taken by phone and entered into the FuelSoft back office, which allows for the job to be allocated to a specified driver. Transport Manager Colin, continues, "Building loads is simple. Using the tick box system, orders can be entered then scheduled and sent directly to the driver on the TouchStar in-cab computers. We now have the ability to view the deliveries to map point which enables us to consolidate deliveries more effectively".

The driver of the vehicle is required to complete the start of shift procedure before commencing the deliveries for the day. Prior to gaining access to the trip details the driver is required to complete a vehicle safety check. The safety checks are designed around DVSA standards and are configurable on a per client basis.

VEHICLE LOADING

As part of the log on procedure, a totaliser reading is taken from the meter and an ODO reading is taken from the tachometer providing automatic verification data of the truck and stock status. Upon completion, the driver would be told what volume of fuel to load onto the vehicle and confirm the action via their in-cab computer.



FUEL DELIVERY

On arrival at the customer site, the driver will then commence the unloading of the fuel. The flow meter connects with the TouchStar in-cab computer to record the volume of fuel that is being delivered. The connection with the meter provides a confirmation of exactly what has been delivered and the balance of fuel that remains on the vehicle. As such a permanent stock check is maintained throughout.

PROOF OF DELIVERY

Upon completion, the delivery information is updated on the TouchStar in-cab computer producing a delivery confirmation for the customer to check and sign on screen. Connectivity to the in-cab printer then produces a signed receipt for the customer. Using 3G communication, the delivery data is transmitted to the back office providing real time proof of delivery. Speaking about the benefit of the system, David Hodge, Managing Director comments, "Attaching the proof of delivery signature to the invoice was a huge bonus for Ribble Fuel Oils. Previously we needed a separate in cab device to capture the signature whereas the TouchStar device already has this capability integrated. Confirming the customer name, capturing the signature and communicating it to the back office in real time has significantly speeded up the invoicing procedure. The system enables us to respond to customer invoicing queries quicker which ultimately benefit our business with improved cash flow."

REAL TIME IMPROVEMENTS

Following the system implementation, Ribble Fuel Oils have identified and focussed on a number of KPI's that will facilitate continuous improvement. The system now delivers performance information relating to number of deliveries per day, distance travelled per vehicle and volume of fuel delivered. The real time information that the system provides has been invaluable with respect to allowing Ribble Fuel Oils to study and compare vehicle performance and overall delivery efficiency. Fuel Director, Ian Macmillan continues, "We can physically see the improvements that the system has made to our operation and this is a big step forward in the business. We have absolute confidence in the accuracy of the data we receive back from the system".

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Ribble Fuel Oils continue to look in to ways in which their existing system can provide even more benefits to the company and their customers. An example of this is that currently delivery detail comments are accessed via the delivery record. Further to a request by Ribble Fuel Oils TouchStar and FuelSoft are looking into ways to present a consolidated list of all comments relating to the entire day's deliveries. This function will further enhance the driver experience of the system and reduce operator error. In addition Ribble Fuel Oils are currently evaluating the benefits of satellite navigation in getting to new customers as efficiently and safely as possible.

Ribble Fuel Oils continue to be excited by the potential of on-board technology to drive future company growth. By combining increased control over processes and increased operational data the overall efficiency of the company can only improve.

CHOOSING TOUCHSTAR

Ian Macmillan concludes, "Fundamentally, we need a very efficient and comprehensive delivery system which is robust, accurate and dependable. One our drivers understand and are happy to work with; both comprehensive but user friendly. The TouchStar system provides all this.

The TouchStar system enables us to track when, what and where we have delivered, in real time. We have drivers / tankers based in unmanned locations, the TouchStar system allows us to create a load via Fuelsoft back at base and transmit the route details to the truck at a click. The driver receives comprehensive load and customer details on his screen and can also feedback additional information such as non-delivery reasons, mileages, and vehicle safety check information. All this enables us to invoice the customer, retain POD's and capture information automatically.

We find engaging with the TouchStar people a breath of fresh air. They listen, react and appreciate our comments. They work hard to ensure that we get the best out of our system and that is very valuable to us.

In short, we feel we have made the right choice and would highly recommend TouchStar."