Risk pays off for Riteway

Alan Manly

A WILLINGNESS to be innovative and to invest in new technology are the reasons express freight company Riteway Express has seen an increase in profits and customer satisfaction, according to Alan Manly, sales manager of transport software specialist Transoft.

Transoft was called in recently by Riteway's management to find a way to improve the tracking of all the paperwork associated with the shipment of parcels.

Manly and Transoft managing director, Michael Porter managed to convince Riteway the only way to do this was to take the plunge and invest in the latest software technology.

Their idea was to develop a means of labelling all consignments and inputting this information into a computer system that allowed almost immediate access to the whereabouts of parcels.

The solution was to use barcodes on each con-note to input all relevant information into the computer, using software they developed themselves.

Riteway can now let a customer know within half a second whether a parcel has been delivered and within 20 seconds can retrieve the original, signed Proof Of Delivery (POD) copy. In addition, Transoft built the software so that it can automatically calculate the billing for parcel shipment based on distance through the use of postcodes.

Manly commended Riteway's management for its forward thinking and willingness to invest in a technology which is still seen by many of the large transport companies as an expensive risk.

"I think the actions of the management at Riteway and the decision to use barcoded con-notes speaks quite highly when you consider only small divisions of some of the major transport companies have done so," Manly said.

"If you're small in a big market that is getting tighter you've got to do something different.

"Riteway made the decision to use barcoding within a month of when they first heard of it and within months of my presenting the proposal it was installed," he said.

Manly first had to convince Riteway to update their existing computer system in order to put Transoft's ideas into practice, a move which involved a considerable investment due to the necessary change of both hardware and software.

Manly said he looked at a number of competitive systems, but eventually decided on a Digital MicroVAX II.

Introduced in 1978, VAX computers feature one operating system common to all models, clustering, which allows many users to share the same data, the ability to network and have a multiuser capacity.

"The VAX is the leading edge of what's available in computers, its operating system is very refined and its main advantage would have to be its 32 bit architecture," Manly said.

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