

Bird Co. crows about TruckStops' benefits

Before William M. Bird Co., Charleston, S.C., started using MicroAnalytics Inc.'s TruckStops for Windows system in early 1998, the wholesale floor covering firm used to manually plan how its 24-25 trucks were to be routed and scheduled out of its Lawrenceville, Ga., distribution center near Atlanta to points in the Southeast.

But soon after Jody Powell, a fleet analyst for Bird, completed the three-day training course provided for new TruckStops clients at MicroAnalytics' Arlington, Va., headquarters and he analyzed the results of using the PC-based system for planning and updating the private fleet's operation, he determined that he could improve the operation's efficiency and cost-effectiveness by cutting one truck out of the Lawrenceville facility fleet and increasing that location's average number of stops per route, assigned to each truck, from 12-13 daily to 16.

The combination of using one less truck, and not having to buy another unit because the company's customer base has been growing, adds up to a total saving of \$140,000, claims Powell.

Bird is "more than recovering the cost of their TruckStop system every month," adds Michael Hooban, president of MicroAnalytics.

And Powell estimates that it used to take him half a day to create the routes, but by using TruckStops he has cut that daily task to about 45 minutes. Those are examples of reasons why more than 1,700 fleets around the world use TruckStops. Customers include Bridgestone-Firestone, E&J Gallo Winery, Nabisco, Ryder, Sears, Simmons Mattress and Western Auto.

The program can be used with either the Windows 95/98 or NT 32-bit operating system.

Proof of savings

One of Bird's drivers insisted that his self-determined, long-used routing plan was more efficient than the optimized routes generated by the TruckStops software. However, the driver bought into the

system after Powell showed him, that the TruckStops' detailed mapping capability—generated by the system's multi-colored, zoomable screen, plus a seamless interface with PC*MILLER/STREETS® mileage software of ALK Associates, Princeton, N.J.—that the driver could drive an average of 80 fewer miles daily and complete his day's run in less time by following the routing generated by the software.

Powell also is beginning to extend the savings the TruckStops systems offers by analyzing traffic coming out of the Lawrenceville facility and subsequently redistributed by trucks at Bird's other branches in the Southeast, which handle a total of 13 local delivery routes.

The system enables him, for example, to schedule and route loads initially destined from Lawrenceville to Bird's branches in Charleston and Greenville, S.C.; Nashville; Raleigh, N.C.; and Mobile and Birmingham, Ala., where the freight is reloaded onto the fleet's straight trucks and pups for local deliveries.

Other capabilities

The system also provides users with the ability to produce customized reports that focus on issues such as per-mile and per-hour costs, travel times and distances, vehicle utilization and driver performance.

And the system's Stop File includes critical information on customers and their requirements, such as name, address, ID number, type of freight to be handled, pickup or delivery time windows, and longitude and latitude coordinates.

Also, data can be imported to, or exported from, TruckStops via a fixed ASCII format. As a result, users can download orders from an IBM AS/400 computer or any order-entry system into TruckStops, run the routes, and then export the new routes back to company's main computer or to an onboard computer system in a truck.

For more information about the TruckStops system, you can go to MicroAnalytics' Web site www.bestroutes.com or call 703-841-0414. □

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