

# Payne Air Conditioning

Vehicle Tracking and Bin Information System Case Study



## Industry:

Air Conditioning and Heating Systems

## Challenges:

- Need to track vehicles in real-time to respond to customer calls quicker
- Need to integrate new wireless vehicle tracking technology with already installed dispatch system and mobile devices
- IT to help streamline operations, improve productivity and customer service

## Results:

- WebTech's Quadrant system improved productivity and customer service by allowing Payne to track its vehicles and integrate seamlessly with dispatch system for ease of use by dispatcher and mechanics.

## WebTech Wireless Glues Together Dispatch System with Vehicle Tracking

### About Payne Air Conditioning

Payne Air Conditioning is one of Florida's largest providers of air conditioning and heating systems to residential and commercial customers. Serving the central Florida area, Payne Air Conditioning has been in business since 1936, installing, repairing and servicing thousands of units every year.

### Need to Monitor Operations from Dispatch Centre

Payne service vehicles are continually dispatched throughout the day to respond to customers. One of the main challenges the dispatcher faces is there is no knowing how long a service call can take. Many times unforeseen problems have to be attended to, turning a one-hour service call into a three-hour parts replacement call. This means the dispatcher will have to be flexible in allocating vehicles to various locations and be dependent on service technicians to be responsive to that need. This process would be hampered by the dispatcher not knowing exactly where, and how far along, the service call was at any one time, relying on calls to each technician to find out about progress and dispatch accordingly.

### Using IT to Improve Customer Service

Payne has used information technology to streamline its operations and provide better customer service for quite some time. As IT trendsetters in the industry, the company installed its first computerized accounting system in 1972.

Two years ago it deployed a mobile dispatch board to allow the technicians to dispatch themselves from the road using a wireless Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), as well as gain information on the customer's service history and parts inventory from their current IT system "Profit Tracker" by FACS Management Systems, Inc.

They still needed an efficient solution for tracking vehicles in real-time and integrating with the current IT infrastructure. That new solution would also need to complement the current mobile dispatch board. Payne selected WebTech Wireless to solve both the vehicle tracking and in-vehicle communications challenges, and they did so at a reasonable cost. That integration was successfully completed by WebTech's and, the current IT provider, FACS Management Systems' personnel having the ability to integrate both systems, and working diligently to accomplish the communication that was needed to pull this off.

WebTech's solution combines on-board computing, Global Position System (GPS) technology and two-way wireless communication, with the Internet and digital maps to allow the service fleet to track, manage, locate, monitor and communicate with their vehicles. WebTech, working with FACS Management Development team, was able to program the PDAs to allow the transmission of information

## WebTech Wireless and Payne Air Conditioning

back to the Dispatch Board with one key stroke on the PDA. Neil Chan, Senior VP of Business Development at WebTech Wireless comments: "The WebTech solution, Quadrant, provides GPS-based location information in real-time to increase fleet productivity, as well as a wireless connection to allow the driver to communicate with the office and look up information via the web."

58 trucks across three departments have installed the WebTech Locator device. A GPS/GPRS device, the Locator is installed in each individual vehicle and allows managers to track vehicles and utilize collected field data to ultimately improve operations. Vehicle data gathered by the WebTech Locator can be accessed via a web interface through any PC connected to the Internet. Three separate log-in screens have been set up for the three department managers to look up the location of each of their trucks. The dispatcher gains access to all 58 vehicles to help her allocate the closest vehicle and technician that's available for a new job to improve on operating efficiencies and customer service.

### Putting Information in the Driver's Hands to Improve Productivity

With these technologies at her fingertips, the dispatcher can now be more efficient in allocating jobs to the appropriate mechanic. Once the dispatcher takes a customer call, she puts that call on the dispatch board. The company has had to invest in an atomic clock as the board and all the PDAs needed the time to be synchronized perfectly. "We have now got to a point where our mechanics would not have to come into the office if it weren't for the need to hand in cash and other paperwork," says Pat Long, Executive Secretary for Payne Air Conditioning. "The mechanics sign in for work at 6.30 a.m. and do so through their in-vehicle mobile devices." Once they log onto their PDA, they are fed their schedule on-screen.

With one keystroke the driver dispatches himself and that dispatched call shows up as green on the mobile dispatch board. As he arrives at the customer, another stroke on the PDA shows up yellow on the dispatch board to denote that he's on location and once finished, the driver can allocate an invoice number on the screen as well as click once more to tell the system that he has completed the call. This shows up in red. Once completed, the whole process starts again, with the driver dispatching himself to the next call.

Pat Long continues: "Our intent in providing our mechanics with PDAs was to provide them with more information in the field and, vice versa, more information about the field operations to our dispatcher. Not only does the PDA provide us with an important link to our dispatch, but also

provides the driver with current customer history, such as the date a unit was installed and serial numbers on the unit and its parts, and an inventory of the parts he has in his vehicle and those we have back at the office. They can also look up matching parts and their availabilities in their vehicle or at the office. We realized early on that this makes our mechanics more responsive to our customers."

As the mechanic is on a job the dispatcher, in the meantime, is taking customer calls throughout the day and is allocating and re-allocating vehicles depending on availabilities and location. The result is the mechanics' schedules are flexible and ensures that the company is more responsive to customers.

"WebTech's Quadrant solution is the glue that holds it all together," continues Pat Long. "They ensured that we had the right chips in the Locator device for our mobile dispatching system, that again working with our current IT provider FACS Management, the PDA was compatible with the system and that we had easy to use software in the office and on the devices. The whole process is now seamless, giving more power to our dispatcher and our drivers to react to our customers."

### WebTech Features Enhance Productivity

Recently, the company upgraded its system to include Quadrant's geo-fencing feature. Each employee parks the vehicle outside their residence every night. Payne has put a geo-fence around its vehicles from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. to ensure they are not moved at night. In being able to prove that all its trucks are used for work only, Payne has been awarded a discount on its auto insurance.

"Later this year we're planning on signing up for another WebTech service, using GPS co-ordinates to schedule maintenance service calls," comments Pat Long. "This service will help us to make further savings on time and gas consumption."

### Productivity and Customer Service Improvements

"We're in a business that needs to respond to new customer requests every hour of the day. It was, therefore, essential to us to find a system that helped to track our vehicles," says Pat Long. "Having already invested significant dollars in dispatching technologies and PDAs, we needed to find a system that not only help us track our vehicles, but that also integrates seamlessly with our current IT. WebTech did just that and, as a result, has improved our productivity and customer service across the board."