ULINE

CASE STUDY INFORMATION

Shipper Customer	Uline	
Case Study Tittle	Automated Dispatch and In-transit Visibility	
Objective	Digitalize the shipment dispatch process as well as gain access to real-time in-transit visibility information to better plan and improve transportation spend.	
Participating Council Organizations	• Averitt Express • Estes • Old Dominion Freight Line	• Pitt Ohio • project44 • Uline

About the council

The Digital LTL Council is comprised of industry leading Less-than-Truckload (LTL) transportation and technology providers. The purpose of the council is to facilitate collaboration, automation, standardization, and digitalization across all LTL industry participants with the hopes of elevating the industry together.

Synopsis

In an effort to improve operational processes, efficiency, and reduce unnecessary internal costs, **Uline** set out to improve internal workflows and end customer experience by digitalizing the LTL Dispatch process, as well as receive real-time in-transit visibility updates. The Uline team noted that the initial process of dispatching shipments to LTL carriers was extremely manual, time consuming, and prone to error. Further, the lack of automated in-transit updates lead to dock inefficiencies, higher dwell, increased costs, and a poor end customer experience.

After partnering with the members of the LTL Digital Council, Uline was able to automate the following LTL lifecycle processes: Dispatch and Tracking

As a result of this automation, Uline was able to realize the following benefits:

1. Dispatch process automation + cost savings
2. Elimination of missed pick-ups
3. Significantly shortened carrier dwell time
4. Increased JIT delivery commitment adherence

Inefficient Dispatching

While examining the legacy dispatch process, the Uline team noted three distinct types of dispatching processes that were dependent on the individual selected LTL capacity provider:

1. Automated dispatches via EDI
2. Manual dispatches via websites or portals

3. Manual dispatches via phone or email

While the EDI connections did function automatically once they were built, configured, and tested, the Uline team noted several key deficiencies with maintaining these connections:

1. **Cost to configure and test connections**
   a. Because of the non-standardization of the EDI format, initial setup and configuration requires coordination across multiple parties
2. **Maintaining IT talent with required EDI skillsets**
   a. As newer communication formats, such as API, have become the norm, the team noted that it was expensive and difficult to find IT talent that had the required EDI skill set
3. **Ongoing maintenance costs**
   a. Inflexibility of EDI formats increase chances of single party configuration or formatting changes interpreting or totally disconnecting automated EDI functionality
   b. Due to the real-world implications of successful dispatch EDI functionality, investment into monitoring and staffing to quickly resolve issues became an expensive line item

Manual dispatch requests, while in some cases are more efficient and faster than EDI or electronic dispatch requests, required dedicated resource investment and commitment. Further, the added manual touch of the dispatch process was very error prone. Several instances were noted of missed requests or pick-ups for confirmed loads as a result of human error.

Inability to Efficiently Plan

As is the case with many modern supply chains, Uline's customer base increasingly relayed on just-in-time (JIT) manufacturing practices to lower inventory holding costs and efficiently manufacture the goods required to service their end customers. Being able to consistently rely on shipment status and is essential for ensuring that the materials can be received when expected and immediately be consumed for the manufacturing processes. Failure to do so causes large downstream supply chain impacts and can negatively impact margins for all parties involved.

Having experienced the customer impact of delayed shipments, the Uline team closely examined the current processes that were being executed to receive shipment statuses from

their LTL capacity providers. The team found that the two most common ways to receive load status information was by either:

1. Manual calls to LTL capacity providers or account reps
2. Online websites or portals to track via PRO/BOL#s

In both instances, the Uline team had to disrupt their internal processes and leave their tools to retrieve status of these loads. In some cases, the status of the shipment was received as a result of a multi-party phone tree, the status of which may or may not have been accurate.

Digitalization of Dispatch + Tracking

Partnering with their chosen LTL capacity providers (Averitt Express, Estes, Old Dominion Freight Lines, and Pitt Ohio) along with their preferred visibility partner (project44), the Uline team created an API-first, one-to-many integration directly into the systems of their LTL capacity providers. By doing so, the team eliminated the need for manual verification in their dispatch or tracking processes and ensured that the most accurate, timely information was presented natively within their TMS.

Dispatch

Once a rate is secured, Uline can now issue a dispatch request and receive automated confirmation without the need for human intervention. This request has been included as part of the Uline team's native workflow and no longer requires manually access multiple systems to accomplish. Not only has this API integration been very impactful for the Uline team but it has also reduced cost for the participating LTL capacity providers.

Tracking

While in transit, Uline is now automatically alerted to status events and exceptions as their chosen LTL capacity provider moves the freight to the destination. These automated alerts have significantly increased the agility of the Uline team, empowering them to respond quickly to exceptions, inform their customers, and ensure that any requirements for JIT manufacturing are kept. Additionally, this information has allowed for better dock planning at the destination, reducing the dwell time of the LTL capacity providers participating.