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20% More Business With Aljex Software Input Cut by 2/3 - Paper Overflow Eliminated

Choptank Transport was flourishing, but its operations software was not keeping up. Company executives looked to the marketplace for a replacement earlier this year.

The transportation intermediary was founded in 1998, at a time when the computer already ruled transportation transactions. Vice-President Geoff Turner got his MBA that year and immediately applied the business principles learned to the management of freight traffic. Today, the firm consists of a full service transportation brokerage, freight management operation, a truckline, a warehouse and agents throughout the country. Choptank provides full freight management and contract logistics. Its principals got their start in the poultry business, where they learned every nuance of temperature control and food transport.

Choptank began its operation with proprietary operational software created by their in-house information technology team. It was based on a Microsoft database.

As interactivity and reporting demands grew, the company's software started having trouble keeping up with constant changes and advances. Turner realized they had outgrown their own system and decided to see what the market had to offer.

Research included talking to many brokers about what they were using, its benefits and drawbacks and what they would go to, if they were upgrading for growth. The name Aljex kept popping up in the conversations.

After a wide search of broker operation software, Turner invited Aljex to tell them about the Internet-based software they had developed. Choptank was impressed with the fact that Aljex was concentrating solely on transportation intermediary software. They did not claim to have software whose size fits all. Their efforts were intense on flexibility, ease-of-operation and keeping ahead of the growth patterns seen in brokerage.

"From our five years experience in business," said Turner, "We knew how important it was to stay constantly ahead of customer, carrier and industry protocols in technology. You get a few steps behind and you are lost!"

Initially, Turner was reluctant to move to a Unix-based system, on which Aljex software is built, since all their experience had been only with Windows.

President Tom Heine presented the software demonstration at the Choptank office in Preston, MD. Said Turner, "I was impressed that the head of the company was so hands-on that he was the guy doing the demonstration."

"Tom Heine won my confidence quickly," Turner remembers. "He explained things in-depth, responded explicitly to every need we identified. I found myself trusting him and believing he could deliver the goods."

"As we got into testing and then actual use of the software, Tom and his staff were right there with us. No matter what time of day or night we had a question or needed help, they were immediately accessible. The response time was instant. They really earned our loyalty and respect. They are people of integrity."

The average age of Choptank personnel is 35. The group is extremely computer-literate as well as being transportation professionals. They had very specific ideas about where improvements in operations management could be made. They took to the software immediately.

Steve Covey, Choptank's Director of Business Development, was interested in transaction cost. He wanted

to do more transactions per hour, to control operational costs and allow more business to be handled by the same size staff.

"Within the first hour of the demonstration, we could see the benefits this software would bring us," stated Covey. "The screens were easy to move around. We could have multiple screens up at once. A change made in one place would automatically be incorporated in another, without extra input. It was fast and easy. As the employees tested it, their enthusiasm grew. It was extremely well received."

Being smart consumers, Turner and Covey called numerous references and heard their opinion of Heine and his company repeated by people who had already been there, done that. They were convinced and authorized the purchase of software and server. The Aljex system is also available through a monthly subscription basis that reduces the initial cost. Data on the subscription basis is maintained at the Aljex office.

For Choptank, the decision was made to purchase so that data could be stored on their own server. The company executives foresee constant changing and enhancing as the company continues to grow and expand its service. Changes can be done easily due to the flexibility of the Aljex software. For Choptank, the software has been configured to allow new agent offices virtually instant access and use. Every office is currently tied into the main office. Aljex software is on 15 terminals at their corporate headquarters.

"Once we started using it, we found that it streamlined everything we do, from A to Z," said Covey. "Aljex has really grasped the essence of our business and how to maximize automation and eliminate redundancy."

Inputting rough data now takes 1/3 of the time it did previously. Choptank personnel can put in three times the number of orders in the same amount of time, with the same staff. Where there are duplicate loads, they are copied over in seconds. Multiple drops are easy to do. Said Covey, "It streamlined our operation from ground zero right through accounting, tracking and payment."

Turner reported that in June, with one less staff person than in previous months, Choptank handled 20% more business.

"Think of what that will mean to productivity, profit and customer service," he pointed out. Speeding up regular transactions means we have time to seek and handle more business, more time to find trucks in the current capacity crunch and more time to be innovative with challenging assignments."

Scanning of documents, which is an integral part of the Aljex system, has also added time saving and efficiency to the Choptank operation. Turner explained, "We have a 40 foot trailer outside the office half full of white document boxes holding bills of lading. If someone requested a copy of an old document, it could take us 30 minutes to find it. Now it is immediately accessible and we fax it or email it right from the computer in 30 seconds. How's that for efficiency?"

Turner has found that the Aljex software has helped access more trucks to move customers' freight. The system automatically posts their loads on freight boards Getloaded.com and Internet Truckstop.

"We are receiving tremendous exposure and matching more loads to freight than before with this automated assistance. We're bumping out there in real time. It's awesome."

Aljex has been producing software since 1994. Before then, they had first hand knowledge in operating a freight brokerage. Their team develops software specifically for non-asset-based transportation service providers. From their corporate headquarters in Summit, New Jersey, they serve clients throughout the U.S. and Canada.

President Tom Heine explains, "We strive to deliver productivity in every part of our software with rapid and accurate functions." Dependability, speed and interactivity are major factors cited by Aljex customers that account for their high level of satisfaction.

With the expansion of transportation intermediaries into international freight transport, the scope of their software development is now global, encompassing customs, cross-border transfers and regulations worldwide.

Details: www.aljex.com

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