

DDS TAKES AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLY INC. FROM CLIPBOARDS TO LIVE DELIVERY UPDATES



More Deliveries Per Driver

“The one thing we have to do well every day is have the right parts in stock and get them to customers in a timely manner, so they can get their cars out of the shop the same day,” says Rob Jacobs, vice president of Automotive Supply Inc. “Activant Dispatch and Delivery System™ not only gets our drivers out the door faster, we’re making 15 percent more deliveries than before.”

With more than half a century of experience competing against national chains and independents, Rob knows that having the right information systems can provide the essential edge his business needs. Previously, Rob and his co-workers struggled to keep eleven drivers and their trucks organized using handwritten notes and eraser boards. It was a well-oiled operation, but there was room for improvement.

“Typically, our dispatcher didn’t begin thinking about a driver’s next deliveries until he walked in from his route,” Rob explains. “A lot of valuable time elapsed before we’d get him back out for his next deliveries. Now our Dispatch and Delivery System informs us of each truck’s location. Our dispatcher knows when a driver is ten minutes out, and she has his next batch of deliveries ready for him when he gets here.”

The dispatch team uses the detailed data provided by Activant Dispatch and Delivery System (DDS) for each order and delivery location to prepare staging shelves for each driver, so all the parts and invoices are ready for their next batch of deliveries.

The system also creates printed reports that inform drivers of the sequence to follow to complete these deliveries. “This system has improved our turnaround time so significantly, it’s equivalent to having an extra driver,” Rob says.

Instant Access to Order and Delivery Status

Rob knows that his customers remain loyal because of his focus on customer service. He is always looking for ways to improve the process of getting answers to customers more quickly. Previously, if a customer phoned to ask about the status of an order, countermen would need to call them back later with an approximate answer.

Rob illustrates an example: “A shop owner would call and ask where his fan belt was,” he says. “That would send us on a hunt, attempting to follow a paper trail. Based on handwritten notes and an eraser board, we’d try to figure out which driver had been assigned the delivery. We’d find that driver’s clipboard, which had hopefully been updated, and try to determine what time

PROFILE

Headquarters: Wichita, Kansas

Sales Breakdown: 80% wholesale, 20% retail

Number of Employees: 23

Locations: 1

Founded: 1954

Affiliation: Professional’s Choice

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VICE PRESIDENT
AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLY INC.

he left. Then we'd make our best guess about when he would probably reach the destination. That process could take 10 or 15 minutes before a return call, and we still could not provide specific information about delivery time."

With DDS, Rob's countermen are just a few clicks away from the information they need to update customers on their order delivery status. "We can immediately tell a customer that the driver is ten blocks from his shop and should be there within a few minutes," Rob says. "We can finish the call in seconds, making the customer happy and freeing up countermen to work on more valuable tasks."

Automotive Supply's DDS system uses the Activant GPS Tracker™ add-on module to provide a live map of the service area to the company dispatcher and anyone else on the system. GPS Tracker integrates with DDS, combining global positioning system (GPS), mobile phone, and Internet technologies to automate delivery status. Active points on the map represent the precise locations of all the trucks in Automotive Supply's fleet, which updates every 60 seconds.

Automation That's Easy to Use

Rob says his employees easily learned the new system and quickly became comfortable with it. He cites his dispatcher as an example: "She had never used a PC in her life," he says. "And she was completely contented with the manual, paper-based methods she had always used to keep track of the fleet. She didn't want to change. But she learned DDS very quickly. Now she loves it. She's much more productive, and she's more professional as well."

The workload has also been lightened for drivers. Because delivery information is automatically updated by the system, drivers don't need to be data entry clerks in addition to their primary responsibility of quickly delivering merchandise to customers. "DDS lets our drivers be drivers," Rob says. "They are much more efficient and focused now."

More Selling Time and Happier Customers

DDS streamlines efforts for countermen and management by making timely, accurate information available at their fingertips. At the front lines, countermen have instant access to essential information that customers require. For management, a wide variety of reports are available that can keep them informed of every facet of the company — from high level business trends to minute details.

All these improvements to the workflow increase the time personnel can devote to sales. But they also deliver another fundamental result: happier customers. "Our customers often comment that we go the extra step for them," Rob says. "Activant technology helps us get the right parts to them quickly, and that makes them look good to their customers."

"We're running a smarter business," he summarizes. "DDS provides up-to-the-minute information about each order. We have more deliveries per driver, instant access to delivery status, more selling time, and happier customers. What could be better?"



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ABOUT ACTIVANT

Activant, a leading technology provider of business management solutions serving small and medium-sized businesses, offers customers tailored proprietary software, professional services, content, supply chain connectivity and analytics. Activant's systems are designed to help customers increase sales, boost productivity, operate more cost-efficiently, improve inventory turns and enhance trading partner relationships.

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