

Any company tasked with collecting all the components required by a major car assembly plant, and delivering them to the line on time, knows that failure isn't an option.

Arrive late, or with the wrong items, and production might have to stop temporarily. Lost output results in lost income, and an angry customer.

Well-acquainted with the needs of the motor industry, UCI Logistics ranks Jaguar and Toyota among its major clients.

"We manage all of the former's inbound logistics in the UK, and we're the largest supplier of inbound logistics services to the latter in Britain," says systems director Kevin Higgs (below). "We also do a lot



UCI: Servicing the needs of Jaguar and Toyota.



of work for Remploy, Tesco, and a major pharmaceutical company."

Its automotive business grew substantially in 2002, and much of that growth can be attributed to the organised approach it has adopted.

"About three years ago we decided to look for a new computerised transport management system that could do everything from route and schedule jobs to generate proofs of delivery and invoices," Higgs recalls. It opted for a package sourced from Enterprise Software Systems, and uses it daily on its motor industry contracts.

Enterprise's other customers include Tibbett & Britten, Hays, Golden West Foods, Devon & Cornwall Constabulary, and Exel subsidiary Tradeteam. The last-named has installed the company's GTS/ESP – General Transport System/Enterprise Software Planning – package at several of its sites.

Set up in 1997 following a management buy-out from GE

NO ROOM FOR ERRORS

UCI delivers parts to the assembly lines at Jaguar and Toyota – if it gets it wrong car production stops – that's why it needs a foolproof IT system, says Steve Banner.

Capital Solutions, Enterprise has offices in Altrincham and Mansfield.

Picking up car parts from various points around the country and taking them to a plant is a bit like organising a particularly complicated bus service or milk run. Although the routes tend not to vary too much, it's time-consuming to draw up a schedule manually. That's where Enterprise's software comes in.

"Jaguar will tell us everything that needs to be collected over the next ten working days, the information

is fed into our system, and it creates a schedule," Higgs explains. "We can plan all of a day's collections in under an hour.

"However we'll usually spend two to three hours on it, because the planners need to go through the schedule to ensure that it makes sense. They'll come in at 6am, and it will all be done by 9am.

"Most days they have to intervene manually because the factory may, for instance, decide it wants a larger volume of parts than usual picked up from a particular supplier," he

says. Extra resources may have to be allocated to the task.

Toyota's approach is slightly different – possibly a reflection of the different type of product it produces. "It will give us its requirements for a whole month in advance, and they vary little from day to day," Higgs says.

All sorts of safeguards are built in to ensure no attempt is made to use resources that aren't there. "The system takes driver holidays into account, for example, as well as the availability of trucks and trailers," he says.

Faxes are generated to tell

suppliers when the trucks will be arriving, and what they will be picking up. If there's a discrepancy between what the driver has been instructed to collect, and what he is given, then he calls home base immediately. "The next step is for us to contact the manufacturer and ask what action should be taken," says Higgs.

Decisions have to be taken promptly. The driver may be collecting parts from up to eight different

suppliers, and can't afford to hang around.

Enterprise's package includes a rating schedule that's used for invoicing. "It's got a lot of flexibility," he says. "You can have a flat rate from A to B, or band the country into different rating areas, or rate by weight or by the number of pallets or cases."

It will tell you who collected a consignment, who delivered it, and will produce over 100 standard reports. "It will give you the profitability of each vehicle, for instance," he says. "You can also allocate costs to each depot. All of our depots are treated as profit centres.

So has it proved reliable? "We had a couple of bugs that had to be ironed out at the beginning, but it's been fine since then," Higgs replies. "Enterprise's help desk is good, and gets back to you quickly, although in truth we

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only need to contact it once a month at the most."

For the future UCI is looking at introducing a satellite-based tracking system that will allow it to see where vehicles are, and send drivers lists of jobs that can be regularly updated. "We'll have one up and running for Toyota by the end of 2003," he says.

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User-friendly system that cuts operating costs

Tradeteam is equally happy with what Enterprise has to offer, and employs it at what it classes as its primary locations. The primary operation moves 80,000 loads a year using 60 double-shifted 38- and 44-tonne artics plus subcontractors.

"The other solutions we were offered typically focused on order capture and transport planning," recalls information systems project manager, Chris Meek. They didn't offer enough in terms of centralised order administration, and information storage. "What's more,

only a limited amount of bespoke enhancements were required to ensure that GTS/ESP met our needs," says Meek.

"It's user-friendly, with good graphical tools," adds Richard Gosling, general manager, primary operations. "Because we've got one consistent view across the whole cycle, from order capture through to confirmation of delivery, and accounting, we've been able to improve fleet utilisation," he says. "We've also been able to reduce operating costs."

Parcels giant Reality Logistics

too has installed GTS to automate the management of its primary distribution network. With a whopping 100 million deliveries a year to handle, it's about to integrate it with Enterprise's ESP planning system.

"It will allow us to visualise our resources, and plan graphically," says logistics programme manager, Chris Haighton. "We envisage a significant increase in the speed of planning and replanning, allowing us to provide a faster response to the changing demands of our third party customers."

