Acree Air
How Acree Air doubled their fleet and service calls with less money and resources.
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Jack Westenbarger, Vice President

CASE STUDY

Fleetmatics

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trucks was that we’ve grown into a service-based company and we need to get our trucks where they are going quickly,” says Westenbarger.

With a mobile workforce consisting of about 40 field employees and 35 vehicles, Acree must be able to use those assets efficiently. And with up to 100 emergency calls coming in each day, Acree must also be able to locate and route technicians as fast and efficiently as possible.

It’s different from how the company operated as an installation-only company. “Now there is no planning,” says Westenbarger. “Today, when you come in in the morning, you may have no calls planned, but by 10 a.m., you’ll have 50. If you want to profit, you have to be able to route those calls efficiently and you can only do that with a GPS system that integrates with the software that runs your service department.”

**Being a service-driven company requires efficient integrations**

Although Acree had used GPS systems in the past, they never worked as efficiently as the company had hoped. Since the company had relied on dESCO for service management for more than a decade, Acree leaders consulted that trusted software provider to help them find a full service fleet management tool.

“We switched to Fleetmatics five years ago because we wanted a GPS fleet tracking system that would integrate with dESCO,” says Westenbarger. “Before Fleetmatics, I had to look at two separate screens to see where my trucks were and get all the information I needed. Now, the two systems blend together so I get all the information I need in a single view. The integration eliminates a lot of extra steps.”

And it was more than just a matter of convenience. “If we still had a system that wasn’t integrated with dESCO, we would need three or four dispatchers to do what we do with two today,” says Westenbarger. “And people are very expensive to employ – you have to pay them, provide benefits for them and it all adds up. If I can do more with less, I’ve made us more profitable and efficient.”

For Acree, the biggest benefit, though, was in internal workforce improvements. “Our biggest benefit of integrating Fleetmatics and dESCO was in internal workforce improvements,” says Westenbarger. “We used to have four dispatchers, but now we just need two with twice as many trucks in the field.”

**An internal view of the integration**

For Acree team members, the integration has been a successful and seamless one. “The two companies have worked together to make sure the data is blended together so we can keep our costs low by needing fewer people to read, interpret and manage all the data that makes our company work,” says Westenbarger.

“*I’m running a multi-million dollar company and I couldn’t do it without Fleetmatics or dESCO.*”

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However, that’s not to say that Acree didn’t encounter some challenges when they announced the new GPS tracking system to its technicians. “We knew our people were going to think, ‘Why are they watching us?’ but we knew we needed to do it, so we were open, honest and transparent about what we were doing,” says Westenbarger. “Now, the team likes that we can get them places faster and help them when they are lost. It’s been a win-win for both the company and our employees.”

But it’s not just people-savings that Fleetmatics has brought Acree. “It used to be that a truck would last us only five years,” says Westenbarger. “Now, with GPS and Fleetmatics, I have trucks that are seven or eight years old. I’m down to significantly less mileage per vehicle, despite running more service calls than I’ve ever run before.”

Additionally, Acree trucks reach clients faster with Fleetmatics. “We were at four hour time windows when we started with Fleetmatics and now we’ve gotten it down to two hours,” says Westenbarger. “Customers can choose from more than 400 air conditioning service providers. Only Fleetmatics can help us match the level of service that smaller companies can provide.”

Keeping costs low and keeping trucks on track

And although customers might not realize it, they’ve been reaping the benefits of the Fleetmatics integration too. “Because Fleetmatics has saved us money in all kinds of ways, we can get to more calls during the day with less down time, so I haven’t had to raise my diagnostic fee in eight years,” says Westenbarger. “More with less, so we don’t have to raise prices and can keep our costs down. We don’t have to charge the customers for our inefficiency.”

Additionally, since Fleetmatics, Acree has reduced the number of accidents it encounters each year and has virtually no off-site or off-hour violations. As a result, not only are Acree employees safer, but it also reduces the risk of injury to other people and helps keep insurance costs lower.

Beyond that, it’s also important that the company’s trucks are being used only for work-related purposes. “Fleetmatics gives me peace of mind to know that my vehicles are safe at home and not out moonlighting, being driven around to local pubs or strip joints and giving us bad PR,” Westenbarger says.

With these new vehicles costing more than $20,000 each, it’s important that they are being used and maintained properly. “And it’s not just because the vehicles are so expensive, but because our fleet represents one of our biggest forms of advertising,” says Westenbarger. “Customers see our trucks on the road and if our guys are out there driving crazy, that’s going to destroy the relationship with current and future clients.”

Not only does Fleetmatics and dESCO help get an Acree Air technician to the job, it helps get the right Acree Air technician to the job. “dESCO helps us assess the client’s needs and Fleetmatics helps us find the closest tech to get to the client. If we make the wrong decision, we not only risk profits, but we risk losing the client because their needs weren’t satisfied.”

In the end, says Westenbarger, it comes to giving customers what they want. “When it’s 95 degrees or more in their house, customers want to know you will be there soon – not the next day. Our job is to figure out how to make that happen because if we don’t, someone else will.”

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