

PRESS CONTACT
Deborah Schaller
S&S Public Relations
847-415-9301
dschaller@sspr.com



Prairie Farms Cooperative Discovers its Cash Cow: Apacheta RouteACE™ Distribution Software Improves Accuracy, Speed of Deliveries

*Wireless Handheld Technology Allows Distribution Personnel to Provide
Accurate Information to Customers and set the Stage for Growth.*

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA--OCTOBER 10--Got milk? It may sound like a simple question, but the logistics of delivering milk and dairy products to retailers can make for a complex and often daunting task. In the past, dairy cooperatives produced tremendous amounts of paper, often confusing deliveries, invoices, and payments; however, that is a thing of the past. Prairie Farms Dairy, one of the largest dairy cooperatives in the Midwest, has turned to wireless handheld devices that allow delivery personnel to communicate directly with managers, streamlining the ordering and delivery processes. Additionally, Prairie Farms has implemented advanced distribution software produced by Apacheta in order to allow the company's distribution network to function in the most modern and efficient way possible.

Overview

Prairie Farms Dairy produces a number of different fresh, cultured, and frozen dairy products that are sold in stores, schools, and other institutions throughout the Midwest region. Distribution personnel deliver the cooperative's products directly to clients either by order or as necessary, and monitor the stock levels of shelves at various locations.

But many of the delivery personnel employed by Prairie Farms were using outdated invoice systems to record stock levels and complete orders. The company was plagued with delivery errors and inefficiencies, resulting primarily from its continued use of either handwritten delivery invoices or aging handheld devices. In an attempt to modernize their operations, Prairie Farms contacted San Diego-based Apacheta Corporation, a recognized leader in providing advanced revenue management solutions for businesses based on route, transportation, and mobile sales.

Analysis

Apacheta began by analyzing the distribution network used by Prairie Farms. Apacheta knew that a distribution network based on handwritten invoices required extensive back office personnel to transfer each invoice into an electronic format. In addition, the company understood that creating electronic invoices from handwritten information exposed Prairie Farms to a number of different data-entry errors, which would ultimately result in distribution mistakes on delivery routes and cost the company time and money, and quickly undermine customer confidence.

Apacheta outfitted Prairie Farms distribution network with its RouteACE™ distribution software, which would replace not only the paper system used by a bulk of the

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company's delivery personnel, but also the outdated handheld technology utilized on select routes. RouteACE™ handhelds were distributed among the deliverymen, and Prairie Farms' personnel were trained on how to enter and quickly upload data through the RouteACE™ docking system.

Results

The RouteACE™ software allowed distribution personnel to immediately enter data regarding invoices, routes, and customers into an electronic format, eliminating the need for back office data entry personnel. During the process in store, an accurate invoice is printed wirelessly over and left behind with the customer. When deliveries are completed at the end of day, distribution personnel simply return their handhelds to their docking stations within the depot, and information is immediately uploaded into the Prairie Farms host system database, over wireless connections. This eliminates the need to contend with shared access to host resources, thus streamlining the process and reducing extended end of day cost due to wait time. Then at night, the handheld software wakes up and retrieves the download for the next day's route, before the driver shows up in the morning. Prairie Farms corporate personnel can monitor deliveries, check invoices, and address any potential problems using a standard web browser via the Apacheta ServerACE™ portal middleware and integration server.

The RouteACE™ software provided a flexible infrastructure that could be monitored and then adjusted to meet the specific needs their delivery processes. Unlike typical route accounting software that requires the customer's operations to conform to the software and its predetermined process, RouteACE™ is specifically designed to fit and adjust to the mobile processes of different organizations, as individual tasks within the software's architecture can be customized without altering the application itself.

Immediately after distribution personnel began using the wireless RouteACE™ handhelds, Prairie Farms recognized the benefits of the new software. "In the areas that had previously used an accounting system based on handwritten paper invoices, we have seen a drastic reduction in delivery and ordering errors," said Mark Harris, CIO of Prairie Farms. "Overall consistency of operations has improved, and we have realized a 10% improvement in cash receipts using the cash collection module within the RouteACE™ application."

About Apacheta

Apacheta Corporation provides the industry's most advanced revenue management solutions for route, transportation and mobile sales based businesses. More than mobility, Apacheta brings business process management and flexibility to all our solutions. Additional information about Apacheta or its revenue management solutions can be found at www.apacheta.com.