



# Melton Truck Lines hauls in e-business value with online tracking service.

In the shipping industry, just completing a delivery is not enough. With thousands of competitors, shipping companies must distinguish themselves by the value they bring to the customer. More and more, customers are requesting information regarding the status of en route shipments. Yet, allocating personnel to handle such customer inquiries can prove costly.

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*—Randy Rhines, Vice President of Information Services, Melton Truck Lines, Inc.*

provides worldwide access to shipment tracking information through the Internet but also differentiates the company from competition. The application, the Melton Internet Tracking System (MITS), was developed using IBM Net.Data and IBM DB2 for AS/400. Using MITS, customers can access information regarding the current location of their shipment and its estimated time of arrival, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

As a result of implementing the solution, Melton is saving \$18,000 annually in costs related to providing toll-free telephone services, as well as \$4,500 in annual costs

<b>Application</b>	Online tracking service for truck fleet
<b>Business Benefits</b>	100% ROI in 12 months; annual savings of \$18,000 in toll-free telephone service; \$4,500 saved in annual telecommunications hardware costs
<b>Software</b>	IBM Net.Data® IBM DB2® for AS/400®
<b>Hardware</b>	IBM AS/400 IBM Netfinity®
<b>Business Partner</b>	MBA, Inc.

Seeking to reduce these costs while enhancing the quality of customer service, Melton Truck Lines, Inc. recently developed a Web application that not only



Melton Truck Lines keeps its customers connected to their shipments with an online load-tracking service.



for telecommunications hardware. "We are getting a far greater value from this IBM e-business solution than it cost us," says Randy Rhines, Melton's vice president of information services. "We earned 100 percent ROI in less than 12 months and will continue to accrue savings from this service indefinitely."

### **Tracking your assets**

Based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Melton has been offering reliable transportation since 1958. The company's fleet of 500 flatbed trucks hauls steel rods, building materials and other large commodities for companies—including the Chrysler Corporation, John Deere and Wal-Mart—throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico. With its operations spread so widely, Melton uses state-of-the-art technology to maintain close contact with its drivers and their trucks.

Each truck is fitted with a tracking device that transmits information about the location of the vehicle to Melton by satellite. Drivers are also provided with a computer console in their truck cabs for exchanging messages with the head office. The information gleaned from this system is stored in the company's back-end IBM AS/400 server.

### **Web-based access—convenient and cost effective**

In the past, Melton provided its customers a toll-free phone number to access the company's tracking information using terminal emulation software. "Our telephone bills were as high as \$1,500 each month," recalls Rhines. "That doesn't include the cost of setting up a modem bank to receive those calls."

To offset these costs, the company teamed with IBM Business Partner MBA, Inc. to develop a solution that would provide access to their data through the Internet. MBA hosts Melton's Web site on an IBM Netfinity server, which is tied into the AS/400. Registered customers are given user IDs and passwords to log on to the Web site at [www.meltontruck.com](http://www.meltontruck.com) and access the "Load Tracking" page where they can easily view shipment status.

When a customer accesses MITS, Net.Data extracts the requested information from DB2 on the back end and displays it on the Web page in HTML. "Net.Data and DB2 form a dynamic pair, enabling powerful database connectivity through any Internet browser," says Rhines. Accessing MITS through the Internet provides support for an unlimited number of simultaneous users at no additional cost. It also increases customer satisfaction. Notes Rhines, "We have had customers try other companies and come back to us saying they were frustrated that our competition does not provide the same level of convenience."

The Web site also displays the IBM e-business Mark, which, according to Rhines, adds special value to the site. "The IBM e-business Mark assures our customers that the site is backed by superior technology," says Rhines. "That makes them more comfortable about doing business with us online."

The quality of customer service that Melton can now provide will ensure that the company can drive toward even greater success. Melton projects annual growth of 20 percent. And, with DB2 for AS/400, Melton is guaranteed the support for this growth. Says Rhines, "IBM has always supported our needs for system scalability and performance. And our new e-business solution is evidence of that."

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