

SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION: **ASSET MANAGEMENT**

# Deliverables

Smart technology keeps client shipments, expenses in check

**J**im Colvin, the CEO of Urban Dispatch Logistics Inc., saw a market opportunity and went for it.

"There's a chasm between the larger overnight couriers' sophisticated delivery solutions – usually based on a central 'hub and spoke' model and the other side of the equation: what is available from the same-day local couriers," he says. "There aren't many courier technology solutions out there that provide customer-centric features, and those that do exist are expensive to the local courier market."

Mr. Colvin says when his new management team was working to increase Urban Dispatch's capabilities and growth potential, they examined the core technologies employed by the company to deliver its integrated, web-based courier services to clients. "We ended up doing a complete rewrite of the systems – ShipManager and Pipeline," he says.

ShipManager is Urban Dispatch's web-based courier management solution. Through this "business process outsourcing" tool, the company's clients can free themselves of managing their courier services and tracking packages.

"The courier portion of ShipManager is table stakes," says Mr. Colvin. "Everything else we do eliminates the hassle because it allows companies to outsource the entire courier and tracking process to us, through one solution, regardless of the nature of the package or its ultimate destination."

Urban Dispatch clients such as Burnet, Duckworth & Palmer and First Calgary Savings have no IT requirements other than a desktop set-up with a web browser. This saves a company both time and money, according to Mr. Colvin.

He says companies save on the cost of managing their courier services internally, with no manual waybills, duplicated effort or complicated rules to follow. As well, time is saved that would normally be spent in manual ordering processes, tracking, interacting with the mailroom and other activities associated with getting a package to its destination.

"We offer companies one stop in meeting their courier needs," says Mr. Colvin, adding that Urban Dispatch keeps it simple with one phone number to call if there's a problem, one web-based interface to manage and one daily invoice to allow companies to track courier expenses.

He says this allows his clients to avoid having to figure out which courier to use for which type of delivery, as well as the hassle of chasing down



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

**Jim Colvin of Calgary-based Urban Dispatch Logistics says his company is realizing solid growth on the success of its services and technology solutions, which enable the company's clients to efficiently utilize multiple couriers and better manage shipments.**

packages in a non-streamlined environment.

"We are an aggregator of the couriers and have created a pool of different courier services to draw from," says Mr. Colvin. "That way, we can choose the right courier for their job and dispatch it right away. And by utilizing a network of existing carrier companies in each urban centre, we are able to optimize the existing local capacity rather than putting more vehicles on the road. This reduces carbon emissions and additional traffic congestion."

From there, tracking a package can be a breeze. "Our technology solution enables our customers to track dispatches from their desktops. The status of a delivery is regularly refreshed by the individual courier companies. This pure visibility – through our dashboard – goes right from pickup to delivery."

"We have over 150 clients, primarily based in Alberta. We're expanding into Vancouver next, then Toronto and Montreal over the next 12 months, and into the United States within 24 to 36 months," says Mr. Colvin.

Pipeline is another of Urban Dispatch's solutions. It operates wirelessly, on Windows-based hand-held devices, and is used to manage wholesale warehouse and mobile distribution. Again, this technology is web-based, allowing customers to use third party carriers, yet still follow the progress of each product remotely as it makes its way from the distribution centre to its ultimate

destination. All this, regardless of numerous changes in custody.

Pipeline is used by Acculogix Distribution Services, a joint venture distribution serv-

ices company that is 50 per cent owned by Jim Pattison's News Group Canada, to manage the distribution of over 100 million magazines a year in Western Canada.

"They were our beta contract and helped us develop this solution based on their own business processes," says Mr. Colvin. "We've saved them a lot of money." ■

**Outsourcing Value in savings, efficiencies**

When a large, Calgary-based law firm switched to Urban Dispatch Logistics' web-based courier management solution, its cost savings were immense. The company saved an estimated \$490,000 a year, according to Urban Dispatch Logistics Inc., which authored and manages ShipManager – the firm's web-based courier management solution.

"By streamlining companies' internal processes, ShipManager can save an average of two dollars to three dollars in buried costs for every dollar spent on courier services," says Jim Colvin, CEO, Urban Dispatch.

He says professional services firms (legal, accounting, consulting, financial services, for example) are able to recoup their client courier expenses – a difficult achievement when using multiple courier companies. As well, legal and administrative assistants gain an average of five per cent in productivity by using ShipManager to order and track shipments online from their desktop, rather than interacting with a centralized mailroom.

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**Management key**

**From the basement to the big leagues**

Urban Dispatch Logistics Inc. started as a three-person business, operating out of a basement. By assembling a core team of seasoned management professionals, Jim Colvin, CEO of Urban Dispatch, brought the company out of the basement and into the real world.

"We brought in very experienced guys who understand business," he says.

The team consists of Mr. Colvin (a lawyer by profession), chief financial officer Darrell Skoreyko and chief technology officer Jean Drouin. Mr. Skoreyko has over 20 years in various management, accounting and auditing roles in government and industry, and founded a consulting and software development company in 1996 that was bought by Cognicase/CGI in 2002.

Mr. Drouin's 22 years of experience, in large and small IT project management, has been with companies such as WestJet Airlines and Canadian Pacific Railways.

One of the business strategies the management team has successfully employed is changing its customer profile. "We're not the solution to use if you're sending a sweater to your grandma," says Mr. Colvin. "We are transitioning to organizations with recurring, high volumes of deliveries every day – with 20 transactions a day, minimum."

The company now has 15 employees and boasts over 150 clients.