

It's all in the cab

Technology vendors target driver satisfaction

U.S. Xpress has a reputation for being a pacesetter with new technology. The Chattanooga, Tenn.-based fleet was an early adopter of automated transmissions and anti-collision and anti-rollover systems. Once again, U.S. Xpress is setting a new technology trend — this time for driver satisfaction.

In October 2006, U.S. Xpress announced that it will deploy ALK's CoPilot Truck GPS navigation system across its entire fleet of more than 5,000 power units. The system resides on the truck's onboard devices and provides drivers with spoken, truck-specific, turn-by-turn directions.

A big part of the decision for adding GPS navigation to its cabs was to retain and attract drivers, says Jeff Seibenhener, vice president of information technology for U.S. Xpress. Overall operational efficiency was another factor, he says, as the fleet anticipates that drivers no longer will waste time and fuel searching for addresses.



aaronhuff

ahuff@ccjmagazine.com

Seibenhener says. CoPilot Truck will run on the DriverTech DT4000 Truck-PC, an in-cab system that runs on WindowsXP. U.S. Xpress announced in October that it will roll out DriverTech across a significant part of its fleet to replace existing onboard systems.

The carrier has designed a driver portal that will allow drivers to see real-time information, communicate with one another, receive training content remotely, and enable in-cab education in the DriverTech Truck-PC through Transmarket's In-Cab University. U.S. Xpress also will utilize Tread-1 computer-based driver training modules enabled by In-Cab U.

"We're particularly excited about expanding services to our drivers and making their jobs easier to perform," Seibenhener says. "The more connected our drivers are in the cab, the better our fleet performs."

Technology vendors also are trumpeting their latest features as a must-have to improve driver satisfaction. Some of the latest developments were announced at the American Trucking Associations Management Conference and Exhibition in Dallas in late October.

Maptuit — a provider of truck routing, vehicle tracking and traffic services — announced that mobile communication and onboard computing providers Cadec, DriverTech, GeoLogic and PeopleNet all will offer its NaviGo touch-screen-operated navigation system on their latest generation displays. NaviGo offers audible truck-specific, real-time, turn-by-turn directions.

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"We interviewed drivers, ex-drivers and driver liaisons and found that directions were among the top three issues they had," Seibenhener says. CoPilot Truck will run on the DriverTech DT4000 Truck-PC, an in-cab system

The latest gadgets can help retain drivers and attract new ones.