

Diesel fuel distributor increases sales 300% with ingenious product locator



Enterprise: Grenley-Stewart Resources

Industry: Diesel Fuel Distribution

Application: Data access via handheld held devices allows truckers to easily locate the day's lowest fuel prices at Grenley-Stewart stations along their truck routes. This capability gives Grenley-Stewart customers a field decision support tool that helps them realize true cost savings on fuel.

Profile: A diesel fuel distributor to truckers with more than 1,000 unattended, mostly out-of-the-way fuel pump sites in 23 states. The company sells low-cost fuel on a volume contract basis to fleet owners. A trucker inserts a special credit card to access this low-cost fuel at the pump, rather than pay list price at a truck stop.

A big-rig truck may get just 5 miles to the gallon and travel 1,000 miles a day. For a truck fleet owner, a few cents difference in the price of a gallon of fuel can add up to huge sums in a short time. With price differentials of up to 25 cents a gallon, it can have a significant impact on a company's bottom line.

Grenley-Stewart saves its customers that few cents on a gallon based on volume contracts, but it faced two challenges in providing the lowest cost fuel to its customers. First, its unattended pumps are mostly in out-of-the-way locations—a savings to the company that translates into lower prices for customers but a problem for drivers. Second, like the price of auto gas, the price of diesel fuel at the pump changes daily and varies by location. Grenley-Stewart wanted to keep its customers' drivers informed on where to find the best prices.

The company's first step was to post daily prices for every pump on its web site. Fleet owners could find the day's bargains and distribute the information to drivers over the telephone. Dissemination by telephone was too inefficient for deployment on a broad scale, so Grenley-Stewart added a solution that delivers all the benefits of automation and web-based flexibility at an affordable price.

Drivers were equipped with Palm Computing® platform devices, modems and software from AvantGo. With this solution, the company delivers the latest information directly from its web site into the hands of its mobile customers. Drivers download the latest pricing and station locations from a kiosk at a Grenley-Stewart station, over the telephone or via a wireless modem. Offline, they can use AvantGo's familiar web interface to check up-to-date information, find the lowest prices, and make decisions about where to stop.

The solution helps truckers easily find the best prices along the route and gives them maps to get to the pumps. For truckers in their 18-wheelers, the Palm Computing handhelds are the ideal mobile solution to enable Grenley-Stewart's low-cost strategy.

To give truckers greater incentive to use the devices—and Grenley-Stewart fuel—the company is developing an application that lets truckers complete their Department of Transportation (DOT)-required log sheets—where they start and stop each day—and submit the forms over its network to the DOT.

Grenley-Stewart salespeople received the first feedback from customers about the new devices. "With the maps and fuel information on the Palm Computing handheld, they don't know I'm there to sell them anything," said one rep. Customers are eager for this innovative, money-saving Palm Computing platform solution that makes their job easier, saves their drivers' time, and adds to their profits. The feedback to Grenley-Stewart has been equally positive—in just 18 months, sales have climbed 300%. An innovative idea and Palm Computing platform devices have had a measurable impact on the bottom line.

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