Orchestrating efficier
and exports with IBM

Tricon Steamship Agency, Inc. and IBM

‹ overview   Transformation   Outcomes

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Steering through bus
in search of efficienci

The mighty Mississippi River is critical to the lifeb
economies, with 500 million short tons of domes
discharged between its banks annually. Tricon St
Rouge, Louisiana, plays a pivotal role in deliverin
feed nations. Its onboard agents deftly navigate
2,350-mile waterway and its intricate system of
and service providers across dozens of anchorages, docks, terminals and elevators.
The operations hub of the vessel services agency manages ship logistics and the
delivery of end-to-end services, from supply requisition and delivery, government,
customs and cargo documentation completion, vessel husbandry maintenance and
cargo protective services along the journey before, during and after the ship enters the
Mississippi.

While Tricon has a stellar reputation as a maritime service agency, below the surface,
the four-decade-old business navigates an operations and management system reliant
on its small but mighty team's institutional knowledge and often senior employees'
micromanagement of operational processes. Knowing its intellectual capital will be
lost if employees retire or leave the company, Tricon needed documented, automated
processes with the next best actions to enable much-needed industry and process
knowledge sharing and to facilitate new operations and communications efficiencies.

Recently, Tricon turned to generative AI (gen AI) to explore how this cutting-edge
technology can address the company's unique challenges. What Tricon has found so
far promises to transform its operations in ways that could have ripple effects across
its business and extend to the shipping industry.

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30-min

reporting, reduced from 4 hours

7 day

account settlement, improved from 30–60 day

" With watsonx Orchestrate, we're not just automating tasks. We're not just moving workloads. We're propelling our business forward like we've never imagined—and neither has our industry."

Mike Brown
Chief Executive Officer
Tricon Steamship Agency, Inc.

Transforming business with AI: a journey to success

During a technology education session sponsored by IBM Global, the Tricon senior leadership launched its generative AI and automation adventure. Using IBM watsonx™ Orchestrate, ThisWay representatives demonstrated

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the ability of the solution to automate human resource tasks. The audience's thirst for additional capabilities was nearly insatiable. "After the scheduled session, we spent three hours with the participants examining the data and modeling capabilities available through watsonx Orchestrate and ThisWayGlobal," explains Angela Hood, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of ThisWay Global.

When ThisWay addressed a sampling of business and operations requirements provided by Tricon, the agency's senior leadership team recognized the transformative business capabilities of IBM watsonx Orchestrate. "It was important for us to identify a method to simplify reporting tasks without compromising quality or effectiveness," adds Mike Brown, CEO of Tricon Steamship Agency. "The watsonx Orchestrate demo showed we could eliminate manual data input, minimize errors and increase process velocity across multiple departments. The manual completion of required forms takes each onboard agent four hours a week—with watsonx Orchestrate, the same forms are completed automatically in 30 minutes." Onboard agents and operations staff members have additional time to devote to vital customer care initiatives rather than mundane responsibilities.

Timely communication between shipping companies and ships is critical from the first request for proposal through the close out of the final invoices after departure from the Mississippi. "The next best action [NBA] capabilities of watsonx Orchestrate enable Tricon to access data and generate relevant communications based on the task or action previously performed. This becomes incredibly important because it makes it easier for more people in the Tricon organization to be part of the workflow while consistently adhering to the operational processes, standards and templates defined by the company," cites Hood.

Additionally, watsonx Orchestrate provides prefabricated abilities that may be tailored to meet Tricon's unique requirements without the need for coders. Users can train and expand their abilities utilizing machine learning algorithms, making incorporating new features and functions more streamlined. Because the system is cloud-based, users can access it anywhere and anytime, which facilitates remote work and ship-based reporting and communications.

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From manual reporting to using gen AI for advancement

By implementing watsonx Orchestrate instances across the agency, Tricon saved time and money, boosted efficiency, increased productivity and improved employee engagement. Employees can now concentrate on higher-level duties that require human ingenuity and thought, resulting in better job satisfaction and organizational performance.

"One of my primary pain points was spending too much time doing monotonous operations daily," says Brown. "After adopting watsonx Orchestrate, I can devote far more time to strategy and innovation." The leadership team also noticed a considerable decrease in the time spent on routine jobs, as Brown continues, "Our crews can now respond more swiftly to market changes and deliver superior service levels than previously."

"We've created an operational baseline for each ship type, specific cargo or customer and created a workflow for each," states Brown. "This is going to help streamline that process for me. It can help the employees to better understand the commercial consequences of every event and action and how to report that properly."

He continues: "From the financial perspective, we can analyze a shipping company's creditworthiness and risk based on industry, public and ship-specific data that doesn't appear on a credit report. It helps us ensure that shipping companies pay the right amount in advance, especially for foreign vessels we serve. Now, we aim to close out invoices in seven days versus the 60 to 90 days it took in the past."

Several of the most powerful benefits to the Tricon business are immeasurable. "We can't even measure the time savings we'll experience—and that's not even the true benefit. We're going to have data analytics and processes that are exponentially better," Brown concludes. "With watsonx Orchestrate, we're not just automating tasks. We're not just moving workloads. We're propelling our business forward like we've never imagined—and neither has our industry."

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About Tricon Steamship Agency, Inc.

Tricon (link resides outside of ibm.com) is a premier shipping agency offering dependable and efficient transport solutions for ships calling the U.S. Gulf region. Its dedication to excellence and client satisfaction has earned it a reputation as an industry leader. With over 40 years of experience, it continues to develop and adapt to changing market conditions.

About ThisWay Global

ThisWay (link resides outside of ibm.com), an esteemed IBM Business Partner, is an acclaimed AI firm committed to ensuring customers lead the charge in innovation while upholding the highest standards of compliance. By enabling businesses to harness the synergy of technology and human capability, ThisWay delivers transformative solutions that boost efficiency, unveil valuable insights and yield meaningful outcomes.

Solution component

IBM® watsonx™ Orchestrate

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→

Ditch the repetition

With the AI and automation capabilities of IBM watsonx Orchestrate, you can spend less time on the mundane and more on what really matters.

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