inspHire

Dynamic Hire Management Software
Giving businesses a competitive advantage

Industry Leading Solutions Empowering Business Growth

| Reduce Costs & Increase Profit | Manage Hire, Sales & Service | Advanced Mobile Technology | Complete Control with Real-Time Hire Data | Cutting-Edge Product Development | Support from Industry Experts |

Information is power?

The old saying 'information is power' has been modified by many people over the centuries but a more relevant saying today might be 'information is power - but only if you can decipher and make use of it'.

For years equipment manufacturers have had the ability to collect data from the machines they produce, but more recently the amount of information has ballooned as collecting it remotely has become not only possible, but also cost effective and practical for both manufacturers and owners. The challenge now is to manage and use all that data effectively to help improve the equipment in terms of performance and reliability. For owners the potential is arguably even greater, allowing rental companies, for example, to offer a wider range of specific services, better information for customers and to monitor the performance and profitability of each and every machine and machine type.

Although the ability to gather this information has been available for 20 years or more, the challenge has always been how to sort and use it. In Germany, many rental companies have been using the most basic data for almost a generation to determine when machines were being used, when they were on charge, allowing them to invoice for flat battery call-outs when not given an overnight charge, as well as for two shift work or weekend use.

When the more advanced on-board diagnostics and telematics began to come on stream, the challenge became even greater, not only due to the challenge of managing such a barrage of information, but

because fleets often included a diverse range of telemetry suppliers, none of which were compatible with each other's management software. The alternative was to retrofit new telematics units - at great expense and in some cases complexity - across the entire fleet to unify the telematics under one system/login. In the last year or so telematics systems have become more compatible with each other and rental management software providers are beginning to integrate telematics inputs into their systems.

Practical use

Telematics can bring enormous benefits to everyone - except perhaps rogues and thieves? With equipment often left relatively unsecured on job sites or outside commercial buildings, it is a prime target for theft. Few rental companies can say that they have never had a piece of equipment stolen, whether that be a small push-around scissor lift or a 300 tonne crane! And it is of no surprise that less than 10 percent of stolen equipment is ever recovered. Installing the latest security features such as geofencing, remote locking or engine immobilisation makes it much more difficult for thieves to benefit from their crimes. This can already be seen statistically with a drop in the theft of newer equipment that has such devices built in. The knock-on effect though it that thieves are now targeting older equipment that is not fitted with the latest anti-theft devices.

A jobsite can insist that only operators with a relevant competency card/licence such as IPAF's smart PAL card be used

Safety and productivity

Although anti-theft and location tracking is the feature most often talked about when telematics is discussed the main benefits lie elsewhere, in terms of safety and productivity.

Site safety can be improved by recording handover's and pre-use checks on a driver's mobile device, while unauthorised use can be combatted by replacing keys with smart cards, key pads or mobile apps to unlock the machine. A jobsite can insist that only operators with a recognised and relevant competency card/licence, such as IPAF's smart PAL card, with all machines requiring such cards to unlock them, while the specific

Knowing where your machines are and that they are safe and secure should be an absolute requirement for any fleet manager. JCB LiveLink's enhanced security package sends an alert when machines are on the move.

operator is logged as taking and operating that unit. Delivery status can also be tracked live by the end user, and rental companies can respond more quickly to breakdowns arriving with the right parts and knowledge on how to fix the problem, having diagnosed it before setting out. Finally, when the rental is over the rental company can lock the machine to prevent the old scam of off-hiring the machine early and then continuing to use it on the basis that the rental company will be slow to collect. At the same time the driver can see exactly where the machine is and avoid wasting time driving around a large site looking for it.

Delivery route optimisation and driver monitoring can also provide significant time and cost savings, by using less fuel, while helping reduce maintenance and repair costs. Some companies are rewarding 'smoother' drivers that get better fuel economy and longer brake life, while in some cases penalising those with a 'heavy right foot!' Sharing live fleet tracking data with customers helps take the stress and uncertainty out of deliveries and helps provide more accurate arrival estimates. A better

delivery experience increases the likelihood of repeat business and referrals.

Reliability can benefit as manufacturers use telematics data to improve design and eliminate problems, while for rental companies the new integrated software programmes will make it easier to treat each individual machine or machine type as a profit centre, allowing canny rental companies to clearly see the running costs and balance that against purchase price of specific machine types.

For some time now crane manufacturers have been using black box telematics capable of flagging up live warnings to fleet managers, of practices such as continuing to operate after the on board anemometer has consistently clocked excessive wind speeds or the crane is overloaded due to a shock load etc... The latest move is to automate and integrate job surveys, risk assessments, lift planning and other jobs carried out by the Appointed Person or Lift Manager.

One thing is for certain, the combination of improved onboard diagnostics, the latest telematics systems and connectivity with the integrated rental software will mean that there is nowhere for 'chancers' to hide, as all this data leads to a more open method of working.

With this in mind, many rental management software producers such as MCS, inspHire, Point of Rental along with telematics companies such as TrackUnit are now integrating the manufacturer's information systems into their programmes, allowing rental companies to make more informed decisions through, increased efficiency, greater productivity and reduced costs all leading to improved profitability.

A key issue for equipment rental companies is that each manufacturer has its own proprietary telematic system, each using its own online portal for accessing the data. The integration of telematics information into rental software cures this problem.

MCS Telematics Hub

The 'Telematics Hub' from MCS can show the data from various manufacturers directly to rental fleet operators within its MCS-rm rental management software making it easier to view by configuring and consolidating all the manufacturer logins in one place. This offers a huge operational efficiency to a rental business and when paired with rental management software adds context to all the data that has been logged by associating it with the relevant customer, rental contract and construction site.

For example, as well as seeing where the equipment is, the rental company can see which company rented it, the site it is located, what the contracted hours are, who is operating it and the length of the rental period. The data can also provide information into a machine's movements, its actual operating and recharging hours, safe or unsafe usage by a specific operator and whether they were trained or certified, while greatly assisting trouble shooting in the event of a breakdown.

MCS says it currently integrates a number of telematics systems including Trackunit, CanTrack, Enigma Telematics, JCB Live-Link, Teletrac Navman, AMI, Jobwatch, Pinpoint, QuikTrak, Allsetra and Bomag with several more on the way.

"Telematics and tracking systems have been around the industry for a while, however there are a few key issues which stop rental business getting real benefits from this data," said Brendan Lowe, financial controller of

Telematics Hub can show the data from various manufacturers directly to rental fleet operators within its MCS-rm rental management software.

Asset Tracker amalgamates equipment locations onto a single map using integrated Google Maps.

Clee Hill Plant in the UK. "The MCS Telematics Hub is the first time we have seen a rental software provider produce a workable solution to bring the telematics data to operational staff."

Asset Tracker

Another rental management software provider inspHire has released its Asset Tracker functionality that integrates with Trackunit, JCB LiveLink and CanTrack to improve the visibility of equipment. It amalgamates equipment locations onto a single map using integrated Google Maps, allowing users to pinpoint where their equipment is situated, define a radius for each depot and also access specifics such as the customer details and contract terms.

The Asset Tracker data merges with its centralised telematics data within its rental management software and by bringing the two systems together allows users to view and cross reference their data quickly, tracking the location via GPS trackers, recording equipment usage such as inputs and hours of operation as well as live hour meter readings.

As part of the integration, Trackunit, JCB LiveLink and CanTrack can be opened directly from within the inspHire system doing away with having two systems open at the same time but also making the telematics data easy to access.

"Having quick access to this accurate information allows users to better plan the movement of equipment between sites, optimise depot transfers as well as charging periods while greatly improving customer service," said inspHire's Mark Taylor. "The second part of the development will unify telematics data with inspHire maximising equipment utilisation and taking it to the next level."

"Enabling businesses to see when and where as well as how long equipment has been working helps to ensure customers aren't over-using equipment and all the correct meter and mileage-based services will definitely be completed. It also becomes an invaluable tool to locate missing or stolen equipment."

"The agreement with telematics providers is the first step in bringing telematics and hire data together with more integrations due later this year. It is important that

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS
OF INNOVATION

Point of Rental Software

POINT OF RENTAL FOUNDED	**1983**
INDUSTRY FIRST WINDOWS-BASED HIRE SOFTWARE	**2001**
INTEGRATED WEBSITES	**2004**
DISPATCH CENTER RELEASED	**2008**
INDUSTRY FIRST DEVELOPED WIRELESS ALERTS	**2010**
GPS INTEGRATION RELEASED	**2011**
RENTAL ESSENTIALS RELEASED	**2014**
CONTRACT FULFILMENT RELEASED	**2015**
NEW PRODUCTS RENTAL ELITE SYRINX	**2016**
INSPECTION APP RELEASED	**2017**
TAKING YOUR BUSINESS TO THE NEXT LEVEL	**2018**

The Trackunit Manager web-user interface.

Point of Rental's recent integration of Syrinx with TSO Mobile allows transport companies and rental companies to optimise routes, create geofences and track the fleet in real time.

the development adds value to businesses that are not currently using telematics systems. Rental businesses require a system that collates accurate information in one easy to access, visual screen."

AFI group IT director, Chris Jowett said: "Our industry is only at the beginning of the digital era, where we use information to offer new improved solutions, automation and closer links with our customers and suppliers. Telematics will become mainstream over time. Integrating telematics with inspHire will make it easier for us to adopt this new technology, bringing it closer to our operations team, improving ease of use and encouraging adoption."

Trackunit

One company that has been in the news lately is Danish telematics technology company Trackunit. It announced a major partnership deal with Skyjack to power its all-new Elevate telematics system in February, in March it acquired UK-based telematics provider Satrak and earlier this month confirmed a major partnership deal with the world's largest equipment rental company United Rentals.

The company is to install its Trackunit Manager on a wide range

of equipment in the United Rentals fleet which includes keyless access control to prevent unauthorised use of equipment. The software operates on the Iris developer platform and uses 'Trackunit Go' and 'Trackunit On' as mobile applications.

Michael Bierschbach director of fleet intelligence and technology said: "Every investment we make in technology comes down to two criteria - delivering superior value for our customers and helping them build a successful future. Trackunit has developed a best of breed telematics solution with a global reputation for business intelligence. We are working together to help customers realise greater jobsite productivity, safety, cost management and informed decision making."

Point of Rental

Point of Rental's recent integration of Syrinx with TSO Mobile allows transport companies and rental companies to optimise routes, create geofences and track the fleet in real time. After setting up a company's fleet data in TSO Mobile and Syrinx - or Rental Expert/Elite - the programs work together to map deliveries and pickups providing an
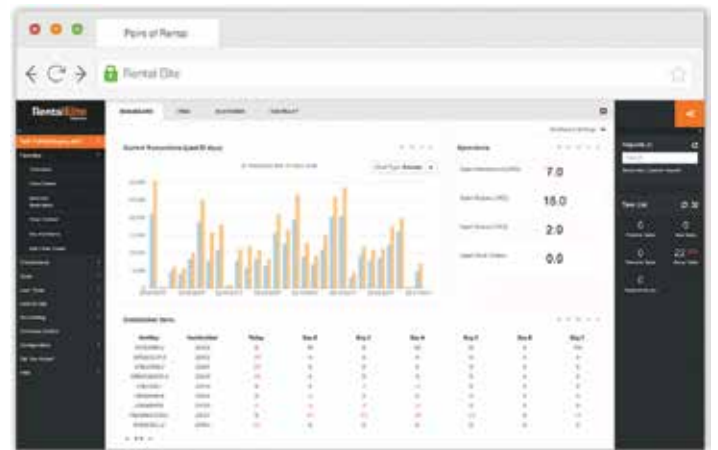
optimised route for each vehicle.

These tracking abilities also allows owners to geofence, to create off-limits areas for equipment and receive an alert when equipment is taken out of designated areas as well as the ability to immobilise equipment remotely if necessary, whether due to misuse, unauthorised movement or simply due to the customer not having paid overdue invoices for the equipment. The vehicle/machine's mileage, hours and fuel metre readings are also readable remotely. The system also allows customers to see exactly where a vehicle or machine is, allowing them to more accurately schedule work for the day. And with telematic information rental companies are better positioned

to call items off-hire or send a mechanic out to a job site before a problem becomes severe.

In summary

Integrating telematics system inputs into the rental management software can provide substantial productivity gains, something that becomes particularly important when rental rates come under pressure. It should also lead to more honest and open relationships with employees and customers alike.

Telematics and the software systems that manage the data are developing so fast and becoming such an important tool in the markets that we cover that we are planning to add further articles in future issues of the magazine.
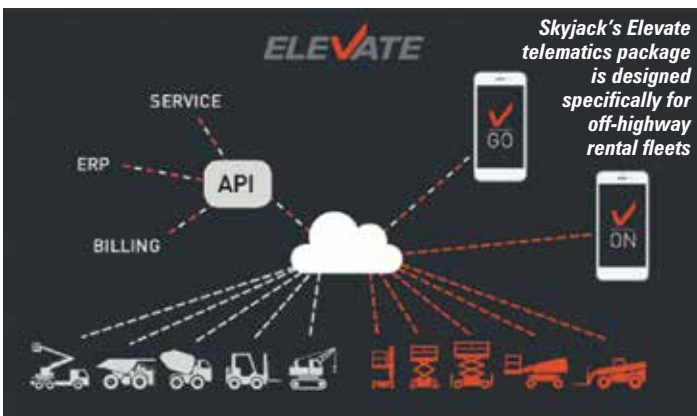
Skyjack's Elevate telematics package is designed specifically for off-highway rental fleets