

## Brown Trucking saves customers as much as \$1M per year using GlobalWave satellite trailer tracking

### At a glance

#### James Brown Trucking

Lithonia, Georgia

[www.browntrucking.com](http://www.browntrucking.com)



#### Goal:

Increase efficiency and utilization of a large network of trailers throughout the southeastern U.S.

#### Scope:

Ave. 2,900 dry van trailers per year (tripled since 2003)  
500 trucks, 12 terminals in the southeastern U.S.

#### Solution:

Installed TransCore's GlobalWave MT3300 mobile satellite tracking units on all trailers, integrating them into Brown's TruckMate TMS

#### Results:

- Timely, accurate fleet reports, delivered daily, have helped Brown (and its customers) improve efficiency
- Saved one customer more than \$1M per year through more efficient trailer utilization
- Reduced trailer losses to near-zero
- Tracking nearly 3K trailers is now part-time work for 1; before, it was tough for 1 FT employee to track 600

**"Companies that don't use satellites to track trailers? If they have more than 50 trailers, they're probably not competitive anymore,"** warned Kevin Slaughter, vice president of operations for James Brown Trucking in Lithonia, Georgia.

"If you're running 100 trailers you'd better be tracking them...probably six are not producing. Of those six, two or three are gone and you're never going to get them back. The rest are idle and you don't know where they are," he said, adding that the financial blow from idle or missing trailers can be substantial.

Brown Trucking is more than competitive: The 42-year old company has quadrupled in size in the last five years. Brown's 12 terminals manage 500 trucks and 2,900 trailers over the last five

years. The company delivers dry van loads across the southeastern United States.

Before satellite tracking, Brown had trouble managing its trailers efficiently. "When we grew to 600 trailers, we had one employee who spent all his time tracking them, and he just couldn't keep up," Slaughter said.

"When we hit 1,000 trailers five years ago, tracking them was a two-person job. Even then, accuracy was really poor. It might take a week to track all of them, the information was old and it was just getting ugly to tell my shippers what was on their property," said Slaughter.

"It was a mess." Without precise, timely maps of trailer locations, Brown had trouble utilizing them efficiently. "We knew we had a lot more trailers than we really needed."

## GlobalWave speeds missing trailer recovery for Brown Trucking

Slaughter's team investigated satellite tracking and bought GlobalWave (then Vistar Data-comm). "We looked at the leaders, we talked to other companies. [GlobalWave] had the edge, the best technology," he said.

Brown piloted 100 mobile satellite tracking units on its trailers and within a year had installed them on the rest of its trailer fleet.

**"If we didn't have GlobalWave, instead of 2,900 trailers I'd probably have 3,300. At \$26K per trailer, that's a lot of money. "**

*- Kevin Slaughter, Brown Trucking*

Ease of installation was a big selling point: "It takes 15 or 20 minutes to install a GlobalWave unit and have it recognized by the satellite," Slaughter said.

### Fewer missing trailers

Brown got the utilization efficiency it was looking for, with an immediate reduction in a typical carrier headache: misplaced or stolen trailers.

"If you're a drop-and-hook operation, you lose trailers every day, it's just part of the business. A shipper loads the wrong trailer and another company pulls it out, a driver forgets to document where he left a trailer, a driver picks up the wrong one...and now you've got a missing trailer. They could be lost for years and years before you get them back," said Slaughter.

Missing trailers drain a company's bottom line. "You lose revenue from that trailer, maybe \$350 a month or more, plus the costs of getting it back. If someone else is using it, you

have wear and tear on the trailer. If it takes you six to nine months to get the trailer back, you've lost all that money," said Slaughter.

If you don't get the trailer back, the costs are even higher. "Even with depreciation, you lose at least \$15,000 on a trailer that you can't recover. Without satellite tracking, all you can do is replace those trailers and hope you don't lose them next year. Any company with more than 50 trailers knows that you need to track them; they've all had trailers go missing."

"When a trailer goes missing, we know, because it's in the wrong location in our reports. We call the company that took it, and often have it back before it's even unloaded, usually within 24 hours," said Slaughter.

Slaughter said that trailer tracking units may actually deter thieves. "Everyone knows we track our trailers; the thieves skip ours and go steal from someone else."

### Better trailer utilization

Slaughter said that Brown was one of the first companies to completely integrate satellite trailer tracking into its TruckMate transportation management software (TMS). "It was a requirement, and now it's a lot of the benefit."

Before, it could take two full-time Brown employees one week to produce an inaccurate fleet report on 1,000 trailers. Brown now receives an accurate report on nearly 3,000 trailers "by 6AM every morning, and it's part-time work for only one employee."

"If we didn't have GlobalWave, instead of 2,900 trailers, I'd probably have 3,300. At \$26,000 per trailer, that's a lot of money. That's the kind of efficiency I'm talking about," said Slaughter.

## Accurate trailer reporting helps sell Brown Trucking to customers

The ability to rapidly acquire accurate trailer tracking data not only helps Brown to make better use of its trailer fleet, it's also allowed the company to provide similar services to customers. Brown employees e-mail at least 1,000 fleet reports to customers each month.

Brown's customers often use Brown trailers for auxiliary storage. "Maybe they only have receiving areas for only one trailer, but have four or five trailers to unload. So they use our trailers as mobile warehouses," said Slaughter.

"We can show customers what trailers they have and where they are," he added, "We actually help them manage their fleet more efficiently." A customer can call to ask for another trailer of goods but, thanks to GlobalWave, "we can say 'you already have four and one of them has the goods you need.' It saves a lot of time and money."

### \$1 million savings for just one customer

Brown saved one customer more than \$1 million per year by using these reports to help them manage Brown trailers more effectively.

"We helped them look at each location, maybe 15 shipping facilities and 150 drop locations, and see where, instead of four trailers, for example, they only needed three," said Slaughter. The company was able to reduce its fleet by 25 percent, from 800 trailers to 600.

GlobalWave trailer tracking data has been so successful with Brown's customers, in fact, that it's become a key differentiator in new sales. "We sell it up the supply chain to shippers and manufacturers. I don't think anyone else has tried that, but it gets peoples' attention," said Slaughter.

"Every time we sell, we show [prospective

customers] our reports, and they see how they can save money. I guess it works; we're four times bigger than when we started satellite tracking," he said.

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*- Kevin Slaughter, Brown Trucking*

### MT3300 cuts tracking costs by 40%

Brown is currently replacing its older GlobalWave units with the newer MT3300s. "The MT3300 is really ahead of the game when it comes to battery life, compared to its competition," said Slaughter.

"The new MT3300 batteries last much longer, so rather than replace the battery packs on the older models, we're just replacing them with MT3300s," said Slaughter, "It's better technology for the same price."

"Replacing a battery probably costs more than most people realize," he added, "\$200, for time, fuel and maintenance costs alone."

By moving to the newer MT3300 units, Slaughter estimated that he will further reduce his trailer tracking expenditures, by about 40 percent per unit. "The old ones cost about \$20 per month per unit. The MT3300 costs about \$12 per month."

"I wouldn't run 100 trailers, let alone 2,900, without satellite tracking. Globalwave keeps me ahead of the competition," said Slaughter.