



Normandin Transit appreciates the flexibility and scalability of ACTION software



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In the trucking industry, companies that want to take advantage of information technology in order to optimize their operations must be able to rely on flexible products that can adapt to the changes in their business.

Normandin Transit clearly understood this. Québec's tenth largest trucking company in terms of volume, with a fleet of more than 200 trucks and thousands of orders every week, Normandin made ACTION integrated management software its basic everyday tool. A next-generation system, ACTION adapts to the realities of the business instead of forcing the business to adapt to it. Normandin uses ACTION for every facet of accounting, which is normal with this type of software, but all too often, it is limited to just that. However, ACTION handles a variety of other tasks for Normandin, including inventory management, payroll, accidents, and orders.

The customized TRIP module

Until 2002, Normandin used two management applications. This duality did not cause any particular problems at the outset, but as the company's fleet grew, things became more complicated. Operations management became more complex, and the company had to hire more staff as a result of using the two applications. In addition, they could not be networked, which made it impossible to share information.

In 2002, Normandin migrated its environment from DOS to Windows. At that time, the company decided to organize its operations with a single system: ACTION, using the software's Transportation Management module. A total solution for managing delivery vehicles, the Transportation Management module makes it possible to manage all of the tasks that a carrier faces, from merchandise pickup to delivery, including all stops and transhipments along the way.

With its open architecture, ACTION meshes smoothly with extant management applications, and makes upgrades easy. Its flexibility and scalability have allowed Normandin to put two custom modules, which were configured by ESI in response to the company's specific needs, into production.

The company calls first module TRIP. Of all of the modules added to ACTION over the years, this is the most important one in terms of the volume of transactions handled. More than 50 employees use it full-time, for tasks that are essential to keeping the business running smoothly, including order-taking, preparing driver route sheets, billing, and managing claims and customs documents.

Among the tasks accomplished using TRIP, managing inventory and dispatching orders are particularly critical. The company carries thousands of pallets of merchandise aboard more than 200 trucks every week. It uses the TRIP module to control incoming and outgoing shipments at warehouses, so that received merchandise is distributed according to its destination. Most deliveries are to the United States, which accounts for 99% of Normandin's sales, but the company also delivers throughout Québec.

Importance of scalability and service

TRIP's functions were phased in gradually. A break-in period of several months was necessary at first, in order to allow Normandin and ESI to jointly test the module before it went into production. Once the performance of the module was optimized, TRIP gradually grew in volume and importance. More recently, another function was added in order to manage cash advances to drivers. Management of the new pre-approved paperwork that is required by the US Customs Pre-Arrival Processing System (PAPS) also had to be added. After preparing these documents manually for some time, the office staff realized that it would be more efficient to do it directly in the management system.

According to Information Systems Manager Éric Clément: "For us, flexibility is an essential characteristic of integrated management software. Not only do we have to be able to add modules and functions as our business grows, but we also have to be able to reconfigure existing functions as needed. That's the main reason why we use ACTION."

"In that context, the service provided by ESI becomes very important, because we use our supplier to configure new modules to our needs and to quickly solve technical problems that



might arise. We need continuous contact with ESI specialists, who give us excellent service. A connection was set up between them and the management system so that they can perform troubleshooting remotely. In addition, the software generates clear error messages, which makes the job much easier for us, from a technical perspective.”

Other customized modules

The second module that was added to ACTION in 2002 was a payroll module. Three administrative employees use it to calculate the compensation for Normandin’s 240 drivers and approximately 50 office workers. The payroll module can compile information such as hours worked, kilometres travelled, expense accounts, destinations, etc. This data is used in preparing the files for transferring funds to employees’ bank accounts.

After 2002, ESI Technologies worked on two other major assets: an accident management module, and another module called ROLODEX. The first is used by three employees in Normandin’s security department, who record all safety-related information: accident details, including photos; driver records; complaint reports; joint accident reports, etc. The ROLODEX module is used to store all of the company’s contact information for customers, suppliers, and partners. New contact information that is input into another module is automatically stored in ROLODEX.

Tight integration

There are many other similar connections between modules. For instance, the information that is recorded on TRIP route sheets is automatically input into the payroll module. In addition, the entire system is extensively indexed, which allows for easier and faster access to information. Another example: an employee who doesn’t have a customer’s order number can locate the shipment using various other search criteria, such as phone number, quantity of merchandise, or destination address.

According to Mr. Clément: “We asked ESI to program the system this way, because we wanted to be able to find information easily. We handle thousands of orders every week, and this produces a huge amount of data, so accessing it had to be very simple.”

Similarly, ACTION’s open architecture made it possible to link the management software to other applications. This was done using the Qualcomm satellite communication system that Normandin uses to exchange information with drivers who are on the road – to tell them what merchandise they have to carry on their return trip from the United States, among other things. The information that is transmitted over this system is automatically input into ACTION, in order to have complete details in the various files.

“We use technology to improve customer service – a factor that is of the utmost importance in trucking. Therefore, we need a system that allows us to mine the information at hand in order to provide top-quality service and maintain our competitive edge. In this respect, we’re totally satisfied with ACTION”, Mr. Clément says.

In all, there are 45 Normandin employees who use ACTION in their day-to-day work.



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