



Isotrak's 3iS integration service aims to reduce empty running and open up new business opportunities in haulage Isotrak has developed a new technology, which enables haulage operators to exchange controllable real-time vehicle visibility and job information automatically with customers, partners and other vehicle fleets.

As a consequence, Isotrak's 3rd Party Logistics Integration Service (3iS) has the potential to significantly reduce empty and inefficient running in road transport, while also opening up valuable new revenue streams for haulage operators with minimal investment required. This could be a major benefit in the current economic climate.

3iS is an extension to the company's highly respected Active Transport Management System (ATMS), which is already in use with some of the UK's most demanding transport operations, such as the supermarket retailers Asda, Sainsbury's, Marks & Spencer and Tesco, as well as the Royal Mail, Eddie Stobart Ltd, Wincanton and many more. Tesco, Asda and the Stobart Group, whose sustainable transport policies lead the industry in carbon emissions reductions, are already backing 3iS for its potential to reduce miles run.

See and be seen in the 3iS 'Club'

3iS users become part of an exclusive 'controlled visibility club', empowered to share details of transport plans and movements to other users as journeys take place. In practice, 3iS Club members can view another distribution fleet as if it was part of their own fleet when they have been given permission by the fleet owner. This means 3PLs and haulage operators can now offer their customers flexible 'virtual fleet' resources, providing not only visibility of work being undertaken on their behalf, but also the opportunity to set KPIs that can actively monitor service levels.

What is visible to whom, and when, remains at all times under the control of individual fleet managers. As a result 3PLs, haulage operators and customers can now enter into deeper and more fruitful business relationships, with complete confidentiality and only minimal administration overheads. This makes it increasingly feasible to reduce the number of miles that vehicles travel empty.

3iS could thus become a valuable

facilitator of backhaul and fronthaul opportunities for retailers and suppliers, permitting the former to save money within their own fleets, permitting the latter to secure new business at marginal incremental cost, and ensuring reduced carbon emissions across the board through "fewer" and "friendlier" miles run.

Low start-up cost for most

Although it operates as a component of Isotrak's modular managed service, ATMS, 3iS does not require users to invest in Isotrak tracking hardware. 3iS includes a new GPS management module that will accept data feeds from a wide range of alternative GPS hardware. Additionally, the system will interface with many external transport-management systems, including products from Paragon Routing and Enterprise Software. This places an extremely low barrier to entry for companies wishing to start enjoying the benefits of 3iS Club membership.

Professional implementation as part of the package

3iS is simple to operate through a standard web browser interface. However careful planning and setup are required to ensure technical interfaces are seamless, and that business rules are set up to deliver precisely the information needed by other 3iS Club members. To assure a smooth and fast start up, and as a core part of the package, Isotrak will undertake a three-phase project in conjunction with its customers to complete their 3iS connection. Isotrak's in-house specialists, drawing upon the company's 13-year transport heritage, carry out a full feasibility assessment prior to planning and implementation.

Comments

Craig Sears-Black, Sales & Marketing Director of Isotrak, comments: "Empty running and poor deck utilisation waste hundreds of thousands of miles and emit needless tonnes of carbon dioxide, but in many cases they could be put to good use if only empty vehicles' whereabouts, destination and characteristics were visible to third parties who could make use of them. 3iS provides the necessary 'controlled visibility' to start addressing this problem step by step - it has real potential to make a big difference over time as more and more users come on board as members of the Club."

Simon Pearson, Head of Central Logistics for ASDA and co-chair of the ECR Europe Sustainable Transport Roadmap project, adds: "ASDA has long been at the forefront of initiatives to improve fleet efficiency through collaboration, and in the current economic climate working together to eliminate wasted miles has never been more important. 3iS could assist this significantly by providing shared visibility of plans and transport execution."

For more information about 3iS, download the new brochure from Isotrak's website at www.isotrak.com.



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Retail Case Study

Transport management systems, such as Isotrak’s ATMS, provide valuable real-time visibility of operations to all stakeholders along the supply chain. Using ATMS, transport managers can pinpoint where there is deviation from plan and take remedial action. However, Logistics Directors continuously look for ways to reduce costs and increase flexibility within their transport operations.

The big opportunity here is achieving better utilisation of third-party haulage fleets, for example those bringing goods from suppliers to the supermarkets’ Distribution Centres (DCs). Traditionally, after delivering to a DC, a supplier’s vehicle returns to base empty. However, every day vehicles leave distribution centres

with spare capacity, meaning they could be used to pull loads that otherwise would require separate journeys by vehicles from the retailer’s own fleet.

The challenge for retailers is being able to ‘see’ that third-party vehicle as part of its own fleet for a certain part of its journey. Modern retail businesses rely heavily on real-time KPIs (such as turnaround time), even for backhauled loads, and thus any third-party vehicle must be fully ‘integrated’ with the retail fleet using compatible telematics systems.

Isotrak’s 3iS allows ATMS-using retailers to see third-party vehicles in as much detail, and as easily, as those in their own fleets as long as the fleet operator permits. This enables everything from triggering store geofences as a warning of imminent arrival, to the automated transfer of trailer contents into a store’s book stock when crossing the final geofence.

The result is much greater flexibility and potential cost savings for the retailer, additional work for the haulage operator and a significant reduction in empty running, which has positive implications for reduced carbon emissions.

Footnotes

1 Freight Best Practice measures empty running in a regular industry survey. Its November 2007 document (Key Performance Indicators for Food and Drink Supply Chains) revealed 24.1% of all food vehicle kilometres run empty -- an increase on the 2002 figure of 19% -- while average deck utilisation, measured by use of deck space, was only 74.8%.

2 Backhaul is the process whereby a retailer brings products from suppliers to its own DCs, using its own vehicles. Fronthaul is where a supplier vehicle replaces a retailer vehicle, to carry consolidated product cages from DCs to stores. Both are powerful tools in the fight to reduce empty running and increase vehicle utilisation. As such they are already central tactics in the Sustainable Distribution strategies of many major retailers.

3 See www.ecrnet.org.