

# Streamlining trucking through data



PeopleNet's new version of its Fleet Manager also runs on its recently released Tablet.

## PeopleNet User Conference highlights new developments, changing IT needs

"Technology has made the difference. We can compete with the big guys."

That's how trucking has changed in the past decade, said Cynthia Normandin, vice president of Braun's Express, a 200-employee carrier based in New England.

Normandin, along with her husband David, president of the company, and her son Stephen, director of Strategic Initiatives (think IT manager) were among over 700 attendees representing 255 firms at the ninth annual PeopleNet User Conference in Boca Raton, Fla. last month.

The conference focused on the expanding information technology needs of today's carriers and the PeopleNet products designed to meet them.

## A company moving forward

PeopleNet was recently acquired by Trimble Navigation, a provider of advanced positioning equipment.

The decision was a big move for the heretofore privately held company, but a necessary change, according to Brian McLaughlin, executive vice president and chief operating officer.

"It was a natural progression," he said. "We need to kick this into next gear, the next phase of our evolution."

PeopleNet currently has around 125,000 subscribers, and that was a big reason to seek a new home with a large, publicly traded firm like Trimble. The acquisition, McLaughlin said, will provide PeopleNet with room for further growth. Trimble, with its reach into more global markets, also provides a

Tom Nunlist • Associate Editor

base for potential expansion beyond North America.

## Fleet Manager

Scalability is at the heart of the newest version of the PeopleNet Fleet Manager system, the core of the company's business. McLaughlin said the system is built to handle future data on millions of power units.

The new PFM represents a 100% overhaul of the original 1998 system and took the company over two years complete. The most obvious upgrade for users will be the new interface. But the improvements are much deeper. Users will be switching into an entirely new back-end system equipped to handle new and different data, changing the user's experience.

Previously, fleet managers would receive reports with essential information about their vehicles, but were still left to sift through data. The new system is exception-based, meaning it sends alerts when something is out of the ordinary, such as speeding and out-of-route events.

Another big change is how individuals in fleets are allowed to use the system. Access can now be tiered according to responsibility level, giving top dogs full access and lower-level managers access to perhaps only one terminal. Also, roles can be assigned according to job description, with administrators, dispatchers and safety managers given specific tools.

Other changes include a new billing system, addition of one-minute breadcrumbs and support of up to 10,000 units on an individual account.

PeopleNet will continue to offer expanded services through third-party providers routed through the system and onto PeopleNet hardware.

Recently the company announced integration of tire pressure monitoring systems from Doran Manufacturing and BatRF by Stemco, in addition to the original partnership with Advantage PressurePro. It also announced an expanded lane-departure warning network, adding inte-

gration of SafeTrak and Mobileye to the existing Iteris system.

The new Fleet Manager system will be offered on all of PeopleNet's platforms, including the mobile PeopleNet Tablet, which was released earlier this year.

## Data data everywhere

"Data is almost more important than actually getting the shipment [there]," said Michael Lackey Jr., director of operations technology with Estes Express Lines.

Lackey, like Normandin, insists

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that staying competitive means both getting data and delivering data. According to Lackey, carriers need to streamline their processes to turn a profit in a low-margin universe, and they need to give shippers tracking information in order to obtain business.

PeopleNet's new PFM can deliver on both of those needs. But Lackey cautioned fleets against panaceas. Staying competitive starts with a fleet's own processes, he said, and ends with technology.

"If you are trying to automate an inefficient process with technology, it is only going to lose you money," he said.

## Rand McNally unveils EOBR

**R**and McNally's new in-cab electronic onboard recorder combines the company's navigation technology with a robust mobile communication system and sells for just under \$800.

The Rand McNally TND 760, Fleet Edition, seamlessly integrates into a truck's on-board computer and sends and receives information via both Wi-Fi and cellular. The device can be set up in less than 30 minutes and does not require the installation of a separate "black box" monitoring

unit like traditional mobile communication systems.

The compact design features a broad array of capabilities including fleet communications via email, driver and vehicle performance monitoring, electronic hours of service (HOS) compliance, and truck-specific navigation. Information on fleet activity is managed via Rand McNally's significantly enhanced FleetWatcher web-based portal.

The TND 760 is the result of the 10-month business partnership between Rand McNally and DriverTech of Salt Lake City.

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

## TECH BYTES

### TELETRAC FLEET DIRECTOR 8.5

Teletrac's Fleet Director 8.5 includes new trending analytics to spot performance peaks and valleys over any recent three-month period among nearly a dozen factors.

Selecting dates/times and any specified group of vehicles, Fleet Director 8.5 users can trend variables including miles per gallon, speed violations, driver incidents such as harsh stopping and hard braking, exceptions, fault codes, utilization, idle time, miles driven, engine time, and travel time.

Fleet Director 8.5 also delivers new, Microsoft Silverlight mapping that's faster, more interactive and more detailed than ever.

[www.teletrac.net](http://www.teletrac.net)

### DISCRETE WIRELESS NOW NEXTRAQ

NexTraQ, formerly Discrete Wireless, has rebranded its fleet tracking and dispatch products.

The NexTraQ Fleet Tracking platform, formerly Marcus, is a cloud-based application that lets service and distribution

businesses optimize fleet operations. The suite of applications includes Fleet Dispatch, Fleet Metrics and Fleet Mobile. [www.nextraq.com](http://www.nextraq.com)

### SAGEQUEST MOBILE APP

SageQuest, a GPS fleet tracking and management provider, released SageQuest Mobile for Android phones. The full-featured version of SageQuest's Mobile Control GPS offers real-time access from anywhere to vehicle locations, dashboards, reports and exception alerts. [www.sage-quest.com](http://www.sage-quest.com)



### MULTI SERVICE, MCLEOD TO INTEGRATE

Multi Service and McLeod Software will integrate fleet fuel management data between the Multi Service Fuel Card program and McLeod's LoadMaster dispatch software. Fleets using the Multi Service Fuel Card for over-the-road fuel

purchases will be able to upload fuel information regarding type, price and taxes paid and purchase location to their LoadMaster software.

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

### INTERNET TRUCKSTOP INTEGRATES WITH PC\*MILER

Internet Truckstop has joined with ALK Technologies to add ALK's PC\*Miler mileage software to the list of decision support tools available to members. This gives Internet Truckstop members instant visibility to PC\*Miler mileage and routing for pricing and operational decisions.

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

### ALJEX SIGNATURE CAPTURE

Aljex Software has integrated Sertifi's electronic signature solution with Aljex's Internet-hosted transportation management software.

Now Aljex users can email documents such as rate confirmations, quotes, or contracts and have those documents returned with valid signatures, without faxing or the use of printers and without leaving the Aljex working screens.

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