



competing with the giants

Smart tools small truckers can use to play with the big boys

By Dan Goodwill

At a recent transportation industry conference, an executive of one of Canada's major freight carriers was quoted as saying that within the next 25 years, the transportation industry will be controlled by 15 global transportation organizations. What struck me as amusing is how many times I have heard the same prediction over the years.

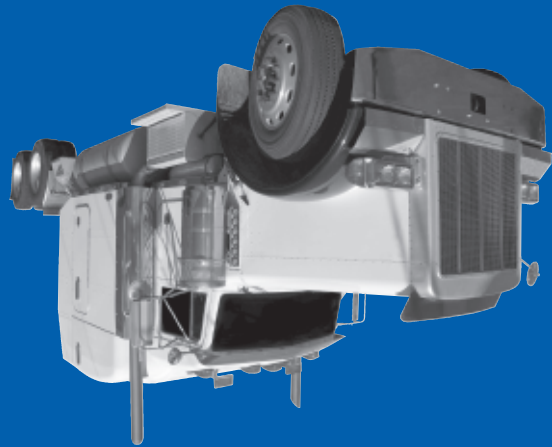
There is no doubt that companies such as UPS and FedEx have evolved to become major players in the industry and are likely to continue to grow and prosper in the years ahead. However, the fact is that many of the giants of years gone by have vanished from the scene. If you look at the list of the top 100 trucking companies from 25 years ago, there are so few of them still in existence today. The list of the top 100 transportation companies is populated with many companies that either did not exist 10 years ago (e.g. Transforce) or were much smaller in size. As long as there are customer needs that are not being adequately fulfilled and there are entrepreneurs and/or venture capitalists and private equity firms willing to invest in the business, there will always be room for new entrants into the market and there will always be opportunities for small trucking companies to reach the pinnacles of success.

What are some of the tools available to small truckers to compete against the giants of the industry? Here are four tools to help you enhance your sales and marketing effort without having to spend the big bucks.

For small truckers, one of the challenges is generating sales without having to make a large investment in sales personnel. "Rent a rep" is how Concept Services (www.conceptservicesltd.com) in Wadsworth, Ohio was recently described. Small trucking companies often don't have the time, resources or desire to make cold calls. To help generate leads, the business development specialists at Concept Services provide the expertise to make the calls, send e-mail and identify viable business prospects for their

clients, many of which are from the trucking industry. According to Greg Harsh, vice

president of sales, his business development specialists take on the identity of the client.



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“We set up a voice mail box and e-mail address for the companies we represent, develop a campaign, develop the leads and hand them off to the client’s sales team for follow-up.” As Greg explained to me, the number of business development resources and time allocations are tailored to the sales capabilities of their clients.

Another challenge for small truckers is effective sales pipeline management. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools have been around for a number of years, either as stand alone modules or as part of server based systems that can cost large sums of money.

What makes the Prophet 4.0 CRM tool from Avidian Technologies (www.avidian.com) so unique is that it is fully integrated with Microsoft Outlook. Prophet 4.0 provides a transportation salesperson or small business owner with the full functionality of CRM. It works with your Outlook contacts so you don’t have to switch programs to manage your sales pipeline. This intuitive product provides features such as advanced filtering of opportunities, sharing of task information among team members, centralized reporting and perhaps most useful, automated scheduling for e-mail, tasks and opportunities, all at a fairly modest price.

Another challenge for small truckers is how to market their core competencies, those that differentiate them from the major players in the industry, on a shoe-string budget. One such tool is advertising on Google (www.google.com). This company has established itself as the dominant search engine. A small trucking company can establish multiple ad campaigns on Google, using the key words that differen-

tiate it from its competitors. A small trucker can advertise in the specific markets of most interest to the company. It can run multiple ad campaigns with no minimum spending requirement or time commitment. The results are very measurable so an advertiser on Google can continue to fine tune its campaign or introduce new campaigns to reach existing or new target markets. Finally, since an advertiser only pays for the specific hits that it receives, it receives good value for its advertising dollars.

According to Pat Quinn, chairman of the American Trucking Associations, half of all trucking fleets in the US have 7 trucks or less. Transmarket Technologies (www.transmarkets.com) has chosen to market its services to trucking companies with 20 trucks or less. TransMarkets describes itself as an electronic agent for small-to-medium-sized independent trucking fleets. It provides its member carriers with high quality loads from quality shippers and 3PLs. Its Virtual Capacity Network or VCAPNET offers a central booking system and central auction network that allows carriers and shippers to consummate transactions and maintain business relationships without having to use multiple systems. But TransMarkets is much more than just a load matching system. Its Cargo IQ system provides its members with best of breed TMS technology. Its TransFund\$ program is designed as a multifunctional, one card solution for fuel, cash and payroll. It guarantees that its loads are paid within five days of receipt of a POD. The Mantazen Fleet Suite system provides “best in breed fuel and asset optimization.” Finally the company’s In-Cab PC provides a range of capabilities includ-

ing serving as a portal for identifying loads from member shippers and offering the “world’s first InCab accredited education and training system.”

Using technology to link shippers to carriers, TransMarkets provides carrier members of its e-agent network with additional freight opportunities, GPS event-tracking, E-Logs, routing, and turn-by-turn directions. Most important, TransMarkets is focused on providing a central network (for domestic US and cross border loads) where truckload capacity and freight can be transacted; a network that is mode, carrier, currency, and language agnostic. “Our goal is to keep your trucks moving, give you visibility and improve cash-flow acceleration, driver retention, and driver quality of life,” stated Craig Fuller, CEO of Transmarket Technologies.

The trucking industry is a very vibrant, competitive industry. These technology based tools allow small truckers to compete effectively with the industry leaders and allow them to make their ascent into the top ranks of this exciting industry. **MT**

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Dan Goodwill is president of Dan Goodwill & Associates Inc. He has over 20 years of experience in the logistics and transportation industries in both Canada and the United States.

He has held executive level positions in the industry including president of Yellow Transportation’s Canada division, president of Clarke Logistics, general manager of the Railfast division of TNT and vice-president, sales & marketing, TNT Overland Express. He can be reached at dan@dantranscon.com