WBT Consultants, Inc.

A Nexmo Case Study

GPSOnIt.com
by WBT Consultants, Inc.

Driving Information Delivered More Effectively and Cost-Efficiently with Nexmo

Overview

Country: United States
Industry: Transportation
Website: www.gpsonit.com

Customer Profile

WBT Consultants provides solutions to help manage and track vehicular assets — from family cars to heavy equipment — from any web enabled device.

Challenge

WBT needed a fast, reliable, and cost-effective way to capture mileage and usage information related to vehicles being tracked.

Solution

WBT integrated the Nexmo Cloud API for SMS into its TripText vehicle management solution.

Benefits

With Nexmo, WBT has experienced zero service downtime as well as greater reliability and deliverability than Clickatell or Uptime Wireless could provide. It has gained a solution that has proved to be more cost-effective than any Twilio could offer.

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— Pat Coggins, CTO, WBT Consultants, Inc.

The Challenge

Most people slipping into the driver's seat of a car or truck are intent on driving somewhere. Writing down details about the odometer reading, the time of departure, or the purpose of the trip are not top of mind, particularly if you're starting out late or the morning coffee has not yet kicked in. Yet those details are important if you are documenting vehicle use for tax or billing purposes. Get behind on the details, and it's money out of your pocket — and not necessarily small change, either.

WBT Consultants, a web app development firm in New Mexico, has come up with a set of solutions that make tracking these details easy. As soon as a driver turns off the ignition in a vehicle outfitted with WBT's TripText solution, the mileage of the last trip and the location of the vehicle are automatically recorded and transmitted to the TripText servers. Then, within just a second or two, the driver receives a text message that asks for the purpose of the trip. The driver simply enters a single letter to classify the type of trip and taps "send." That outgoing text message is immediately passed back to the TripText servers, where it is attached to the mileage record received from the on-board GPS unit.

For WBT's TripText solution to capture this information effectively, its servers need to communicate with the driver within seconds of turning off the engine. If text messages do not arrive quickly and reliably, regardless of where the vehicle may be, the opportunity to capture that information may be lost. The driver may have started another trip and be unable to respond — or, worse, try to respond while driving, which is not something that WBT wanted to encourage.

To find that messaging sweet spot where high deliverability and low latency meet with low price, WBT tried service provider after service provider. It did not stop until it arrived at Nexmo.

The Solution

WBT integrated the Nexmo Cloud API for SMS into its TripText solution. TripText consists of GPS hardware installed in the vehicle and software that tracks not only the location of the vehicle but information about the vehicle itself — the on/off state of the engine, the odometer reading, vital stats about vehicle performance, and more. Whenever the vehicle is started, the TripText GPS system takes a reading of the vehicle's location and then tracks the location of the vehicle for the duration of the journey. When the vehicle's ignition is turned off, TripText passes the mileage information and the vehicle's GPS coordinates to the TripText servers, and prompts the servers to send an SMS

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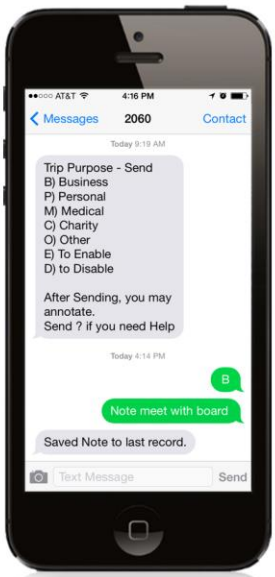

message to the registered driver’s mobile phone.

The incoming text message requests the purpose of the trip. If the driver ignores the message, their predetermined default settings will be entered into the TripText servers. However, they can also send a quick reply: a “B” reply indicates that the travel was business-related; an “M” indicates that it’s medical travel, and so on. WBT’s servers use identifiers embedded in the inbound text messages to map the incoming information to the vehicles and accounts under management, ensuring that all mileage and travel details are attributed to the right accounts and vehicles. At any time, WBT’s clients can access TripText to see detailed reports about the use of their vehicles.

The Results

“Being a small company, we need every edge we can get,” says Sheryl Coggins, Director of Business Development at WBT Consultants. “For TripText to be successful and affordable, we needed a fast and reliable SMS gateway that we could deploy at a reasonable cost.”

Finding that sweet spot was not easy. Some providers, such as Twilio, could deliver certain portions of the desired outcome, but not all. WBT could send messages quickly using Twilio, but it could not embed the critical identifiers that the TripText servers needed without subscribing to Twilio’s short code service. That would have made the TripText service cost-prohibitive for a large portion of the market that WBT wanted to serve. “And without those identifiers, we were blind,” says Pat Coggins, the Chief Technology Officer at WBT Consultants. “We could not map replies from the drivers to the outbound messages that TripText had sent, so we had no way to connect the information in the database.”

Other providers could not provide the reliability or speed of delivery, both of which are critical to the success of TripText. If the text message is not received immediately upon ignition shut-off, the opportunity for information capture may be lost. If the message arrives so late that the driver is already driving again, the risk of an accident increases if the driver tries to respond.

“We ran Nexmo side by side with Clickatell and Upside Wireless during our trial of the system,” says Mr. Coggins, “and Nexmo outperformed both for consistency of uptime. Ninety percent of the time, the message sent via Nexmo was also the first one to arrive at its destination.”

Once the trial was concluded and WBT was satisfied with the outcome, integrating the Nexmo Cloud API for SMS into TripText was quick and easy. WBT took advantage of the extensive examples and PHP libraries available on the Nexmo site and integrated its app fully in only an afternoon.

“We’ve tried just about every SMS gateway around,” says Mr. Coggins. “Nexmo turns out to be the fastest and most reliable of all the providers we tried. It also turns out to be the least expensive. We’ve experienced zero outages since we went live with Nexmo and we’ve reduced our costs by 40%.”