Axsun Revolutionizes Intermodal Shipping With Advanced Asset Tracking

Industry: Transportation
Location: Montreal, Canada
Deployment: 10,000 Endpoints
Product: BlackBerry Radar®
Units: ~175
https://www.axsungroup.com/en/

Axsun, an international intermodal transportation company, is responsible for keeping some of North America's largest brands stocked and supplied. Leveraging an extensive network of partners and contractors, it ships to locations all over the world, including Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Axsun prides itself on the breadth of its services, going to great lengths to ensure that it can meet the unique logistical needs of each individual client.

"From the moment it was founded, Axsun has always been intermodal, using multiple types of transport to ensure the most efficient delivery of freight," explains Steve Ramescu, President at Axsun. "We touch a lot of things on the transportation side, including truck brokering, logistics work, warehousing, and ocean freight. However, our biggest focus – and where we originated – is on the railroad."

When Asset Tracking Goes Off the Rails

"As an intermodal service provider, when you sign contracts with railroads, you get to use their assets," says Ramescu. "Because of this, we didn't maintain many assets of our own in our early years, aside from a few trucks we used for final-mile deliveries. As time went on, we began acquiring our own assets to better serve our clientele."

With this growth came the need for better visibility and control. Axsun wanted to be able to track where its containers were throughout their journey. In addition to enhancing both asset utilization and efficiency, this would also enable increased accountability in the management of their assets.

"Because the railroad only goes to certain cities, we rely on a large network of subcontractors," notes Ramescu. "We needed to know what those subcontractors were doing with our containers after their deliveries were made. We needed the certainty that they weren't using our containers without our consent or in such a way that might create liability risks, such as with the unauthorized transportation of hazardous materials."

There was also the matter of visibility into each container's journey along the railroad. Traditionally, when a container is transported via rail line, the container is not tracked continuously. Instead, each flatcar on a train is assigned an RFID code, which is only read when the train passes through certain segments of the railway.

Unfortunately, because these RFID codes are configured manually, they are prone to error. There's no way of knowing that a container is actually where it's supposed to be.

"About ten years ago, we'd assigned a container to move from Montreal to Los Angeles," recalls Ramescu. "That container wound up in Atlanta, but we didn't know until it arrived there. The flatcar it was supposed to be on kept registering that it was in the right place, but the container itself was misdirected because it was not being directly tracked."

BlackBerry.

Tapping Into a Long-Standing Partnership

As a long-time supporter of BlackBerry, Ramescu was already aware of BlackBerry Radar®, a complete asset tracking solution that is scalable, flexible, and easy to implement. Its rugged sensors are low-maintenance and long-lasting, enabling expanded visibility into everything from a container's location to its contents.

"Axsun has worked with BlackBerry for quite some time now via BlackBerry® UEM," says Ramescu. "When they launched BlackBerry Radar, it seemed like the most logical choice for us. We reached out to them in February of last year, did a brief proof of concept, and then deployed within a few months."

Axsun started with an initial pilot of approximately fifty BlackBerry Radar units. Installation was quick and easy, and BlackBerry provided extensive support throughout. With the success of its pilot, Axsun decided to utilize the solution with every new asset it deploys. Currently, it is monitoring approximately 175 units.

Delivering Better Customer Service

BlackBerry Radar has provided Axsun with precisely the visibility and control it was looking for across its assets, allowing it to ensure that unauthorized use is no longer a concern. It has also leveraged BlackBerry Radar to optimize the maintenance of its chassis units so equipment is properly rotated for a better return on investment across its fleet.

BlackBerry Radar has also benefitted the company in several ways it didn't initially anticipate. Since BlackBerry Radar's asset tracking is automatic, it means less time spent on manually recording data. It's also helped Axsun maximize profits both by attracting new clients and by providing better service to existing clients.

"With BlackBerry Radar, we can give customers real-time updates, so they know where their cargo is at any given time," says Ramescu. "We've had multiple customers confirm that they're increasing their business with us, with one of them representing close to three quarters of a million dollars a year in net new business. When considering the upsides we have enjoyed in utilizing BlackBerry Radar, adopting it should really be a no-brainer for anyone in our industry – the return on investment has been huge."

"BlackBerry Radar also makes our deliveries more efficient," he continues. "We no longer have to wait for railroad notifications. We know right away when a container has arrived, potentially reducing delivery windows by a day or more."

The Future of Intermodal Transportation

With its deployment of BlackBerry Radar, Axsun has assumed the role as an innovative leader in the intermodal transport space, and Ramescu predicts the use of this advanced sensor technology will soon become an industry standard.

"Especially with high-value products, a transport company with a solution like BlackBerry Radar will be the logical choice," says Ramescu. "For our part, if we hadn't adopted BlackBerry Radar, our assets would have become increasingly difficult to manage as we expanded. We'd have no clue where our equipment was and what it was doing – and that's simply not acceptable."

About BlackBerry

BlackBerry (NYSE: BB; TSX: BB) provides intelligent security software and services to enterprises and governments around the world. The company secures more than 500M endpoints including 150M cars on the road today. Based in Waterloo, Ontario, the company leverages AI and machine learning to deliver innovative solutions in the areas of cybersecurity, safety and data privacy solutions, and is a leader in the areas of endpoint security management, encryption, and embedded systems. BlackBerry's vision is clear - to secure a connected future you can trust.

BlackBerry. Intelligent Security. Everywhere.
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