

Controlling Operating Expenses with GPS Tracking: The Ross & Witmer Story



Company Name:
Ross & Witmer, Inc.
Location:
Charlotte, NC
Industry:
HVAC
Fleet Size:
60
Customer Since:
2006

Ross & Witmer is something unusual in the HVAC industry: a 62-year-old business, serving both residential and commercial heating and cooling customers. Based in Charlotte, NC, the company maintains a fleet of over sixty vehicles, many of which are on call on a 24-7 basis. Their busy mobile operation takes them to large construction sites, public buildings and private residences all over the city, making Ross & Witmer one of the most recognized contractors in the area.

Clay Phillips, President of Ross & Witmer, said recently that his company's unique dual focus, along with their established reputation, made them an ideal candidate for GPS-based tracking. "We have service guys driving our trucks everywhere in the Charlotte area, and we see them as rolling billboards for our company," Phillips explained. "We wanted to make sure our people were serving the company's best interests."

Phillips first heard about GPS-based fleet management years ago, but wanted to make the right decision for his organization. "Many of the systems out there didn't have the features and benefits we were looking for... for example, our cell phone carrier kept bugging us about tracking our assets with GPS phones, but we thought that was crazy. We wanted to track our trucks, not our guys."

The versatility and ease of use of the Navtrak system, along with local sales and support, were deciding factors for Ross & Witmer. So far, they

have not been disappointed. "Navtrak has quickly become an important tool for us," Phillips said. "We're using less fuel and putting less miles on our vehicles per month, even though we're just as busy, if not more busy, than we've ever been. Every dollar it saves in overtime, maintenance, fuel costs, etc. is a huge help to us."

When they started using the system, they were straightforward about it with their employees. They explained that Navtrak would help them dispatch more efficiently and save them money on insurance, "but the guys were smart enough to realize what the system was capable of," Phillips recalled. Yet he insists that his drivers and service techs now genuinely appreciate what the system does for them. "For one thing, it enables us to keep allowing them to take the trucks home, which is a huge benefit to them."

Business challenges Ross & Witmer faced:

- **Lack of accountability for drivers** – Ross & Witmer's fleet was becoming so widespread that keeping track of vehicle locations and activities was a real concern. "GPS tracking seemed a smart way to keep our guys accountable," Phillips said.
- **High cost of vehicle maintenance/insurance** – Phillips reports that keeping 60-plus vehicles on the road is "my second-highest operating cost. When we realized that Navtrak could deliver maintenance management and an insurance discount, we knew we had to try it out."
- **Inefficient dispatching** – Often, Ross & Witmer employees were being dispatched across town at the end of a shift, because dispatchers didn't know that another, closer driver was available. Fuel and overtime expenses, along with vehicle wear and tear, were being incurred unnecessarily.
- **After-hours vehicle usage** – Side jobs are common in service industries, Phillips said, "and they can cost you in many ways. We had a guy take on a job after-hours using our name without telling us... so when the customer called later on, we had no record of them. It made us look bad, and could have led to a lawsuit."
- **Inability to protect reputation** – When a service company has spent decades building up its reputation, not being able to protect it is not an option. "We couldn't risk having guys use our vehicles irresponsibly. We knew we had to do something to protect our name," concluded Phillips.

“ From my perspective, sitting in the owner's seat, I know that things are flowing a lot more smoothly, in terms of our responses to calls, treatment of customers, and the attitude of our guys being positive. [Navtrak] helps our entire operation to function more efficiently, and that's what we appreciate most about the system. ”

-Clay Phillips
President
Ross & Witmer, Inc.



Driving Business Success

Benefits Navtrak has delivered:

- **Advantages/conveniences for employees** – Ross & Witmer has discovered that, contrary to common expectations, adding Navtrak has been received as a positive change by employees. “The guys have seen how it can help them,” Phillips explained. “Taking our vehicles home at night is a huge benefit for many of them, and with Navtrak we feel we can comfortably offer that. They also know it’s protecting them in the event of false accusations or vehicle breakdowns.”
- **Significant savings on insurance premiums** – When Navtrak first made Phillips aware of the insurance break he could get by installing the system, he was surprised. “The insurance savings it’s given us have been remarkable,” he said. “They paid for almost half the system alone -- and that’s no exaggeration.”
- **Liability protection** – “Our vehicles represent our company, to a large extent, in the field,” Phillips points out. “And there are lots of ways to get a driver into trouble if someone wants to – your guy cut me off, your guy flipped me off, etc. Navtrak gives us a way to verify whether it’s a real call or a bogus one. It also reduces accidents, by cutting down on speeding and unsafe driving.”
- **Maintenance management** – The company used to fall behind regularly in terms of keeping their maintenance logs updated, Phillips said, because they’d have to wait for drivers to submit their mileage data. But with Navtrak, mileage records, as well as other important vehicle maintenance data, are available at the click of a mouse.
- **More efficient dispatching** – Dispatchers at Ross & Witmer find Navtrak to be an invaluable tool for routing and re-routing service techs, especially when emergency calls come in, Phillips says. “Before, we’d be spending a lot of time calling drivers to see who was available, and then send the first guy we got a hold of, regardless of where they were located. But with Navtrak, we can look at the map, find the closest guy and see if they can take the call. It has saved us a lot in terms of overtime hours and wasted fuel.”
- **Competitive advantages** – Phillips believes that the use of Navtrak gives Ross & Witmer a real competitive edge in the Charlotte marketplace. “As time goes on, companies in this industry that don’t use GPS are going to be missing the boat.” And Navtrak actually helps them to keep their employees, because of its security and fuel-saving features.

Phillips notes that while Ross & Witmer has experienced savings in other areas, such as their monthly fuel bill, “it’s more the costs that you can’t calculate, such as being more productive within the service department, that make the real difference. There’s not really a calculation you can come up with to measure it all -- but I’m going to tell you from my perspective, sitting in the owner’s seat, I know that things are flowing a lot more smoothly, in terms of our responses to calls, treatment of customers, and the attitude of our guys being positive. It helps our entire operation to function more efficiently, and that’s what we appreciate most about the system.”

Navtrak:

The Proven Remedy for Mobile Workforce Headaches

All organizations with mobile workforces contend with “headaches” that limit productivity and reduce profits. If any of the following pain points is an issue for your business, be sure to read the corresponding case study (available at www.navtrak.net) to learn how Navtrak provides the cure!

- Excessive overtime costs:
The Bug Doctor story
- Insufficient knowledge of vehicle location/activity:
The Sunshine Paving story
- Inaccurate dispatching:
The Choptank Electric story
- Security and liability concerns:
The J.H. Peterson story
- Inaccurate tracking of vehicles:
The Boucher Real Estate story
- Inefficient delivery practices:
The Somerset Food Service story

For more information on how Navtrak can “heal” your mobile workforce headaches, contact your local Navtrak salesperson today, or email us at sales@navtrak.net.



GPS-Based Management Tools for Businesses with Mobile Workforces