Success Story | Eastern Propane

Leveraging IoT and Automation to Optimize Business Processes

Eastern Propane, founded in 1932 in Danvers, Massachusetts, is the nation's 14th-largest propane gas retailer and is New England's leading propane, oil and service company. Eastern Propane—now headquartered in Rochester, New Hampshire—serves more than 85,000 customers in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, and it employs 126 people. The company runs JD Edwards EnterpriseOne and Oracle Real-Time Scheduler.

The Challenge

New England's leading oil and propane service company serves 85,000 customers across five states in the Northeast. But its disparate systems and manual business processes held the company back.

Eastern Propane needed to automate service and delivery scheduling and eliminate manual data entry into its back-end system. It also needed to empower field service technicians with accurate, real-time information, regardless of their network connectivity. Eastern Propane needed to do all of this without straining its existing IT staff. Eastern Propane turned to DSI® for a complete mobility solution.

The Solution

DSI helped Eastern Propane integrate its systems and streamline its processes so that customers would receive faster, better service and billing cycles would become more predictable. Eastern Propane had already invested in Oracle's JD Edwards EnterpriseOne. Because DSI offers validated integrations into Oracle solutions, DSI seamlessly integrated into Eastern Propane's existing enterprise software.

Instead of customer data being rekeyed into Eastern Propane's back-end system manually—a process that sometimes took up to a week to complete—information gathered by field service technicians was automatically updated in EnterpriseOne.

To further optimize its existing processes, Eastern Propane implemented DSI's prepackaged Field Service App, enabling real-time information sharing between service technicians and EnterpriseOne. The speed of this data exchange closed

Highlights

- Seamlessly integrated into existing enterprise software
- Easily build, deploy and reconfigure applications as needed
- Information is available directly from handhelds, on or offline

"Information is being collected for a service work order in the field—it's exactly as if someone was sitting at a screen inside our office and typing that information."

— MARK STONE, VP OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS, EASTERN PROPANE

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an important gap between customer service and billing, making the billing cycle much more predictable for Eastern Propane.

The Results

DSI® helped leverage Eastern Propane's significant investments in its Oracle systems, its mobile devices, and—most importantly—its employees. Before implementing DSI's Field Service App, Eastern Propane's IT team was strained by an unwieldy in-house application system.

"With our old mobile application, making modifications required us to build something out in a way that we could only implement in stages. Not to mention we had to physically visit each handheld to promote the updates," said Mark Stone, Vice President of Information Systems at Eastern Propane. Now, Eastern Propane's IT team can easily build, deploy, and reconfigure applications as needed.

Field-based employees can now access customer service information and work orders directly from their handhelds. "With DSI, we can push upgrades out to techs in the field—from one centralized location—with the touch of a button," said Stone. The company's managers, who used to spend several hours each day manually scheduling services and deliveries, also benefit from DSI's solutions.

Oracle Real-Time Scheduler manages service schedules, while DSI's machine-to-machine (M2M) technology sends service orders and schedule updates by text message to field service technicians. Techs no longer have to report to an Eastern Propane office to pick up schedule updates, and they can access customer service information and work orders directly from their handhelds, off-network or on.

By freeing its employees from manual data entry, manual scheduling, and in-person schedule pick-ups, Eastern Propane has significantly increased its daily service capacity. By closing the gap between techs and Oracle systems, customer service has improved, and now Eastern Propane is on the way to becoming a digital company.

Challenges

- Outdated manual service and delivery scheduling
- Finite technical resources
- Inability to provide field technicians with accurate, real-time information
- Lagging billing cycle for over 85,000 customers

Results

- Eliminated errors with M2M integration on fuel delivery trucks
- Streamlined processes to enable faster, better service
- Increased daily service capacity by automating tasks
- Established more predictable billing cycles
- Enabled field service technicians to update information automatically in Oracle's JD Edwards EnterpriseOne

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