

Seth Skydel ■ Senior Contributing Editor

# Streamlining service

A web-based portal is streamlining vehicle service operations for KLLM, Prime, Saia and a growing number of other fleets

From the front office to the shop—and even onboard vehicles—the Internet is playing a growing role in trucking operations. Web-based platforms for operations, service and parts, fuel purchasing and many other business processes are enabling new levels of efficiency and productivity by saving time, lowering costs and improving communication.

“There’s no question that web-based tools are helping fleets better manage service processes,” says Darry Stuart, president and CEO of DWS Fleet Management Services, an independent “limited time executive” transportation and fleet management business ([www.darrystuart.com](http://www.darrystuart.com)). “In maintenance operations they are playing a role in providing information and in enhancing fleet-service provider relationships. It’s invaluable to have updated information on parts, service bulletins and other items online instantly, and by facilitating communications there are benefits in time savings as well.”

For KLLM Transport Services, the Jackson, Miss.-based provider of temperature-controlled services, web-based tools are now part of providing superior equipment reliability. That’s especially important, relates Joe Stianche, vice president of maintenance, because the nature of KLLM’s business means ensuring an extensive en route network of repair services is readily available at all times.

“Our en route repair department is staffed 24 hours a day to handle equipment problems that come up while our 1,300 tractors and 2,400 refrigerated trailers are on the road,” Stianche explains. “We use a network of over 2,000 Freightliner Truck, Detroit Diesel, Utility Trailer and Carrier Transcold dealers as well as a Thermo King service location in Indiana to ensure prompt repairs and minimize delays.”

Playing an increasingly pivotal role in helping KLLM communicate with those vendors is the Decisiv Service Management Platform ([www.decisiv.com](http://www.decisiv.com)). DSMP is used to create, negotiate and approve service write-ups. During a service event, the fleet is provided with updates on vehicle status, including the estimate and expected completion time, and can communicate via the platform with the service location in real-time.

DSMP is currently offered in two versions. FleetBasic is a no-cost option offered through dealer service locations

# via the Internet

where fleets can view individual service events as they occur and have real-time communication with providers. For a fee, FleetPlus adds the ability to track service events and request service across an established network. Users also can access service histories by provider and/or vehicle.

According to Stianche, "We began working with Decisiv in conjunction with our local Freightliner dealers. Every morning we hold a conference call with our major supplier representatives and dealer and service locations to get status reports on trucks that are being repaired on the road. That means lots of calls to a lot of facilities.

"The Decisiv portal has saved us time and effort," Stianche continues. "We're already seeing benefits in streamlined communications and especially the ability to resolve warranty issues quickly. With everybody on the platform, it's like instant messaging with a history of the vehicle and its repair needs at our fingertips. We've even had situations when a truck is out of service in the evening and by the next morning it's off the list and back on the road."

KLLM's en route repair manager, Scott Whittington, agrees. "Using the Decisiv platform is a very effective way to receive estimates, approve repairs and know when our equipment is ready," he states. "Our phones never stop ringing, so this is a great tool for communicating much more efficiently."

Whittington also notes that by incorporating service information from the Decisiv platform, the fleet's vehicle history database is more accurate and up to date. Most recently, that process became even more effective when Decisiv added the ability to support ATA'S TMC Vehicle Maintenance Reporting Standards (VMRS). The platform can now automatically code many standard operations, including a significant number of warranty repairs. Dealer service writ-

ers also can assign VMRS codes for non-standard operations.

A growing number of fleets using the Decisiv platform are reporting similar benefits. At Prime Inc., a Springfield, Mo.-based refrigerated, flatbed and tank carrier, the DSMP is in place for exchanging information and tracking repairs at Freightliner dealers. "This system's biggest advantage is that it gives our staff more time to deal with drivers rather than call shops," states Jerry Miller, road assistant supervisor. "It also provides an accurate record of transactions throughout the repair process. It's a more effective way to work with our service network and increase the uptime of our trucks."

For the past six months, along with a network of Volvo dealers, Saia Inc. has been evaluating how the Decisiv platform can enhance its business processes. The Houma, La.-based regional less-than-truckload (LTL) carrier provides service in 34 states with more than 10,000 pieces of equipment.

"Our initial decision to use the Decisiv platform was based on the challenges we've had with dealer communication," says Jason Plumlee, regional manager at Saia responsible for operations in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. "We're now using the solution to monitor service progress on tractors across our network, and so far it's been working every well."

"More and more trucking companies are utilizing web-based tools to save time and improve communications," says Darryl Stuart. "Like any new technology, though, it's important to have an effective set of business processes and knowledgeable people in place first. Without those basics, it's not possible to run an efficient operation. Then, when you choose tools that will work best for your business, Internet-based solutions can enhance those capabilities." T3