

Cold Chain News

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Hidden costs in Temperature Monitoring and Control

Telematics - the wireless technology that provides the latest in vehicle tracking and mobile workforce management - is not new; it's been a technical reality for many years. But the market for telematics products for fleet and mobile workforce management is in a period of rapid growth. As the industry faces the opportunities and threats that growth bestows, Roger Marks from Aeromark, looks at the market and reflects on what the future may hold.



More than ever before, fleet operators need reliable management systems. The ever increasing legislative burden, the constant need to reduce operating and overhead costs to remain competitive, and the demand from customers to achieve and prove that they achieve their Service Level Agreements (SLAs) ensure that the demand will stay for many years to come.

But therein lies the problem. Demand is high, operators are increasingly understanding the benefits of telematic fleet management systems, yet which companies and products can they trust to be robust and to provide long-term support?

According to Roger Marks, it's a tricky problem. "There are maybe 300-400 systems on the market, probably fewer than 10 of them are truly robust."

But what is meant by 'robust' and why does it matter? "The problem," says Roger, "is that telematics is a very complex system made to look very simple at both ends - the part the customer sees. But it's the bit in the middle that matters most." If the system isn't truly robust everything may appear OK while it's running well, but what happens when something goes wrong! That's when its limitations really show up.

"These systems are providing business critical services, if they go down the business stops, the SLAs cannot be monitored and trouble ensues very quickly. It's a massive problem."

The key is to have a system that has a robust platform to provide data integrity with the facility for remote configuration and fault diagnosis with automatic updates. But to achieve this takes a level of investment in product development that many companies are unwilling or unable to make.

Over the last 20 years Aeromark has achieved a high level of customer confidence by ensuring that software, hardware and system back up systems are all designed and built in house. "Our overheads are mainly in product development and support," says Roger, "not sales. This means that we can react quickly and develop systems that are designed specifically for each individual customer."

The future is going to be buoyant for the telematics industry, that is certain. How well it is sustained long term will depend on the customers' ability to sort the good products and suppliers from the 'me too' companies. It is incumbent upon the telematics industry to try to make their job as easy as possible.

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