The Challenge:

- Reduce site operational costs while maintaining service

- Improve trailer throughput through one of the busiest 3PL distribution centre yards in the UK (500 loads per day at peak)

- Improve the overall site throughput in terms of loads per day; this had become bottlenecked by the gatehouse and yard throughput

Introduction

DHL are responsible for the management of the Unilever Cannock Distribution Centres near Birmingham.

Within their remit as a 3PL, they are always looking at ways to improve efficiencies and reduce costs. To this end, after a careful operational analysis, they realised there was the chance for a significant saving by introducing an automated gatehouse at the site- both to reduce labour costs through the ability to operate with a secure, unmanned gatehouse, but also to improve speed of truck flow into and out of site, and accuracy of data acquisition.

Matflo **Hub**
Components

- Automated Gatehouse
- Quayside Management
- Slot Booking
- Yard Management

Why DAI?

DAI were a proven supplier to DHL, and had previously successfully supplied various products from the *Matflo* product suite across the DHL estate; ranging from complete WMS (Warehouse Management) and f-WCS (fulfilment Warehouse Control) solutions through to other components from within the *Matflo* **Hub**, specifically Yard Management.

Key differentiators of the *Matflo* product suite are its breadth of coverage across the complete supply chain and its ability for seamless integration, and consequently the speed and flexibility with which DAI can deliver solutions from its portfolio.

Selecting the 'Automated Gatehouse' component from the *Matflo* **Hub** product was an easy and low risk decision. In addition Unilever themselves had been working with DAI across their supply chain since the early 90's so also had absolute confidence in the dependability of the DAI solution.

Challenges

Cannock is a large site, owned by the manufacturer (Unilever) and run by a 3PL (DHL), so any evolution of solution involves many different stakeholders who all have a different view of 'what is best'.

In addition, this was the first automated gatehouse deployment into the DHL landscape, hence there was inherent suspicions whether the benefits could be as good projected (in practice they even exceeded the best case scenarios).

Any solution deployed needed to work both for deliveries originating from the four different factories in the UK, but equally well for deliveries from abroad, where drivers, in left hand drive vehicles, who speak a multitude of different languages, but with possibly little or no English, were involved.

Solution

The Automated Gatehouse, as its name suggests, automates the entry process into an operational yard. It significantly speeds up driver entry and exit to a yard, thus increasing site throughput and daily receipt and despatch capacities.

It removes the opportunity for human error into the gatehouse process and does away with the headache caused through the potentially frequent churn of gatehouse staff. It offers the luxury of running an unmanned gatehouse.

The solution is fully configurable, and seamlessly sits within the *Matflo* product suite. It has been engineered, as have all the *Matflo* products, to have a standardised integration pathway into the varied IT landscapes of our customers.

Specific product features include:
- multiple language support- currently 10 different languages are supported
- left and right hand drive ready
- fully web-enabled to allow flexibility in hardware selection
- operationally orientated user interface to speed throughput
- full Management Information features available

The Result

The deployment of *Matflo* Automated Gatehouse component has very quickly proven its worth. A year after go live, the ROI calculation has already shown a full return on investment.

Jim Cordingley-Power, DAI Project Manager: "The deployment at Cannock far exceeded even our best case scenarios. Any solution that offers an ROI of 7 months must be viewed a major success."