

CASE STUDY



"Trapeze and COTA developed an effective partnership that was based on good communication, common core competencies, and a shared vision of the solution."

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Central Ohio Transit Authority

Automating Customer Information Services

BUSINESS PROBLEM

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), based in Columbus, OH, delivers fixed route services to residents of Franklin County and parts of three neighboring counties. The agency receives 3,200 - 4,000 calls per day for route, schedule and trip planning information.

The legacy information system, however, was proving difficult to maintain and upgrade and costs were climbing while the need for better service was pressing.

COTA needed to replace its itinerary planning, bus schedule and service information system with something that could provide automated 24/7 information in a reliable and cost-effective way.

GOALS

To build public goodwill and increase ridership, COTA needed to offer telephone and web-based schedule and trip information services that were convenient, accessible and easy to use.

The agency identified clear requirements for the new system. "The primary objective was to achieve excellent customer service," says Sherri Lowe, Manager of Customer Service. "We required a system that was responsive to the needs of both our ridership and our customer service representatives."

At least 25% of calls needed to be handled by the IVR system, with an overall answer speed of 30 seconds or less.

THE SOLUTION

In July 2001, COTA selected Trapeze Software to implement its new customer information system.

SNAPSHOT

Type of operation:	Fixed route
Number of peak vehicles:	252
Number of routes:	80
Size of call centre:	20 employees
Number of calls each weekday:	3,200-4,000
Trapeze products implemented:	INFO-Agent, INFO-IVR, INFO Web, INFO-COM, FX, PLAN, OPS, PASS, AVL interface
IT environment:	Windows NT4/2000 with SQL server on 20 workstations
Projected Annual Savings:	\$50,000

Using a three-phased approach, Trapeze began by implementing the agent-attended portion of the INFO solution, enabling call center agents to access scheduling data available in Trapeze FX, which COTA had previously installed in 2000.

The second phase integrates INFO with a third party IVR system. In phase three COTA will add the Web module to provide itinerary planning on its web site, along with a customer feedback module.

According to Mark Nawrath, Director of Project Management at COTA, the installation of the first phase was the easiest COTA has experienced. "The plug-and-play design of the INFO application and the easy migration of the fixed route schedule data were big contributing factors to the success of the project".

He also notes that since INFO met most of COTA's requirements, few customizations of the software were required.

RESULTS

With phase one fully implemented and phase two underway, the INFO system has already resulted in efficiency and productivity gains in the call center. Once 25% of calls

are handled by the IVR system, COTA will be able to reduce call center hours, reduce part-time staff and redeploy full-time employees to other tasks.

Lowe is confident that when the web-based trip planning component is launched, call center costs will decline even further.

"Most importantly, Trapeze and COTA developed an effective partnership that was based on good communication, common core competencies, and a shared vision of the solution," she says.

In the longer term, COTA plans to integrate its paratransit schedule data with the fixed route information to provide an integrated information service to transit users in Central Ohio.

BOTTOM LINE

With the IVR system in place, COTA estimates annual cost savings in the area of \$50,000, and likely higher once the Web module is live. The agency is already seeing improvements in customer satisfaction.