

Freightways

Freightways Corporation

Industry: Logistics

Solutions: IP Tel, Internet Express, IP Transit,
Layer 2 Ethernet Service

Challenge

- Cost Centre Management
 - Account Reconciliation
 - Mobile Fleet Management
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The Outcome

An easy access, self-service online portal delivering instant performance overview and solution control.



Self-service capability gives Freightways billing visibility

With customers demanding highly customisable self-service portals to reduce cost and increase control, we designed a ground-up solution – Flex – handing the keys to pilot customer Freightways. Flex functionality is now available to all Mobile customers, with plans underway to scale to other customer solutions.

Flex is an online self-service portal with mobile billing reconciliation capability. Used by Freightways, it gives managers greater insight into the organisations mobile phone use.

Freightways is an Auckland-based express package and business mail company. It is a complex enterprise with 12 divisions, each with its own cost centres and financial reporting needs. The group includes New Zealand Couriers and Post Haste Couriers, along with a host of others.

Monitoring the performance and profitability of each division is a mammoth task with the company calling on us to help streamline that process and reduce the workload.

Account director Gian Marinas says: “Freightways runs a large number of mobile connections across its brands. With such a large number of brands and mobile connections, this creates a challenge for the business when it comes to end of month account reconciliation. When we started working with Freightways, they were using manual processes to allocate each mobile phone bill to the correct cost centre, the right branch and department.”



On the whole the service was good, but we had an issue with the lack of account visibility. This had a huge impact on our ability to control costs. In one case we had a business unit that was spending several thousand dollars a month in call overage. That lack of visibility meant controlling costs was hard.”

*Pieter van Niekerk
Group Financial Controller, Freightways*

Pieter van Niekerk is Freightways Information Services' Group Financial Controller. He says organising the paperwork involved days of work for his team members. Van Niekerk's responsibilities include a transformation role and from that perspective he recognised automation had the potential to cut monthly workload leaving his finance team to concentrate more on areas where they can add value to the business.

He says: "We had a long-standing relationship with our previous telecommunications partner. All our mobiles, landlines, and our infrastructure had been with them. On the whole the service was good, but we had an issue with the lack of account visibility. This had a huge impact on our ability to control costs. In one case we had a business unit that was spending several thousand dollars a month in call overage. That lack of visibility meant controlling costs was hard."

With around 1000 mobiles and 300 data cards, overage costs could quickly get out of hand, with some users using as much as 180GB of data in a month.

Van Niekerk's first goal was to find a more flexible approach to mobile price plans, with visibility being equally important. He says: "We wanted to know what the costs related to, which cost centres, which people, which jobs and so forth. That would give us more ability to control costs. Then we wanted to create efficiencies and remove manual processes. In the past we would have over 1000 invoices coming in every month, they'd go to accounts payable in each of our 12 different businesses for processing."

In some cases, there would be costs coming through for people who had left the company. The employee gets to keep their phone, but the company carries on paying for it because Freightways didn't have the visibility to adjust the billing, as van Niekerk says: "Things disappear when you are dealing with that many lines."

Searching for a more appropriate solution, all their data was pulled in-house, allowing managers to examine the report and gain a better understanding of usage. This was effective in allowing them to examine individual usage, but delivered another problem: the work involved took a huge amount of manual work.

He says: "We wanted a platform where we could action requests like adding or removing a new user or ordering a new phone. We wanted visibility of financial metrics. At this point it was clear we'd need to try another approach".

We won the tender on the back of its ability to provide the necessary automation. Marinas says: "We knew we wanted to automate the process which is where Flex comes in. We were able to develop cost centre tools where the users could allocate phone numbers to a specific cost centre, at a specific branch, at any point in time during a billing period. From there, reconciliation is easy with built in reporting."

Van Niekerk says Freightways wanted a self-service web-based solution. "We asked for single landing page where our users can log-in and get the details for their division. When they log-in they can immediately pull down insights and it is interactive. You can see usage and know immediately what's going on. You can also get historic information. You can even order new devices."



Rosalyn Tigerland, product manager for Digital Platform describes Flex as a one-stop shop that can manage and track a large number of the company's services. She says: "It is the web-based self-service portal which you have access to everything from our company. We built it first for mobile but has wider application. You can use it to handle new mobile connections, perform SIM swaps, manage usernames and order new devices. If a person leaves and you hand their phone to someone else, it's easy to keep track."

The service is extremely flexible when it comes to reporting and this was especially relevant to Freightways, allowing them to easily manage cost centres and allocate specific accounts to them. "You can drill down to investigate individual lines and see usage details and other important information. There are also features for dealing with incidents and for viewing incident tickets. The network stats area allows you to see information on data circuits."

At the time of writing 2 degrees is preparing to add distributed denial of service mitigation into the product. Tigerland says this is very relevant at the moment with a lot of DDoS activity taking place.

Van Niekerk was delighted with how the project turned out. He says: "Our experience has been that 2degrees delivered the functionality we were looking for. It wasn't an easy project for the team and needed some head scratching, but we ended up where we wanted to be."

