

# Attachmate helps Freightliner to become a true 21st century logistics company

Freightliner retains biggest customer with Verastream solution



Formerly part of British Rail, Freightliner Limited was formed in 1997 as a private company following a management buyout. Today, it is Britain's largest intermodal freight operator via rail and road, transporting over one million containers per year. Operating in four deep-sea shipping ports – including Southampton and Felixstowe – as well as 15 inland locations, it manages and tracks deliveries from its fleet of 130+ trains and 300 trucks.

Traditionally, information on the status of its customers' containers was held on Freightliner's mainframe computers and accessed manually. This data would be relayed by phone, fax, or e-mail to the customer. This process was often slow and prone to error, which did not support Freightliner's vision of becoming a modern 21st century logistics company. The company was also coming under increasing pressure from its customer base to provide real-time access to shipping information.

The crunch point occurred when Freightliner's largest customer – accounting for 30% of their business at that time – demanded real-time shipping information delivered electronically. Due to a global system change in the organisation, this customer needed the information sent to them in the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) format that is standard in the transport and logistics industry.

## QUICK VIEW

### Problem

Customers needed real-time electronic tracking information.

### Solution

Used Verastream Host Integrator to extract shipping data from mainframe application.

### Results

- EDI messages auto-generated with each change in shipping status.
- Solution rolled out in six weeks.
- Largest customer retained and satisfied.
- Enhanced opportunities for new business.

Freightliner faced losing the business if it did not make these changes within six months.

The major criteria for the solution were simple. It needed to be delivered quickly and within a strict timeframe, to a reasonable budget, and reliably, as the system generates up to two million messages a year. In addition, Freightliner's containers are tracked using a 3270 mainframe host application called 'ERIC.' A competitor of Freightliner uses the same host and a similar application so the solution had to be non-intrusive, not just for financial/technical reasons but also for the business reason of not tipping off the competitor.

“Verastream is the most suitable technology for real-time customer-focused applications in environments with host systems, and it delivers rapid results without risk to existing operations.”

- Colin Thompson  
Group IT Director  
Freightliner

### **New Mainframe, New People, or New Technology?**

Freightliner considered three initial solutions to the problem:

1. Rip and Replace: Make changes to the existing legacy system.
2. Increase manual headcount: Provide additional human resources to ensure that the work could be carried out using paper and Excel spreadsheets.
3. Host integration technology.

The option to change the mainframe or update was quickly ruled out on the grounds that the procedure would be technically difficult, very costly, and very unlikely to be completed within the six-month timeframe. The option

of taking on additional staff was also rejected due to the fact that Freightliner is a 24/7 operation, and this approach would create huge resource implications. As the company grew, it would therefore need to assign more and more resources so this option could not serve as a long-term solution.

The third option, chosen by Freightliner’s IT and business taskforce, used host integration software. This allowed the company to pick up information from the mainframe, download and format it into EDI messages, and send to Freightliner’s customers. Freightliner’s customers could then simply and conveniently put this information into their own information systems. This solution was not only non-intrusive but also the most cost-effective and least time-consuming process.

Colin Thompson, group IT director for Freightliner, explains: “In selecting Attachmate® Verastream®, we evaluated a number of offerings including NetManage. We chose Verastream because it was the most suitable technology for real-time, customer-focused applications in environments with host systems, and it delivers rapid results without risk to existing operations. A communication mechanism on this scale that offers EDI opportunities enables us to enhance our relationships with our customers and further our commitment to delivering service excellence.”

### **From Proof Of Concept To Full Implementation, In Just Six Weeks**

At the beginning of the implementation, Attachmate provided Freightliner with a proof of concept within just one week. This was a working model that demonstrated – from beginning to end – the EDI message delivery service and how the process works. Thompson

remembers this as giving them “a lot of confidence that the solution would be workable within our existing environment and produce the results that we required.”

Following the deployment of Verastream, Freightliner’s customers could subscribe to an EDI-based notification service providing state changes of their containers (for example, arrival or departure from the port or terminal). To get a complete overview of these state changes, Verastream scans the mainframe every quarter of an hour, generating an activity report every 20 minutes during the day and every hour at night. This is a fully automatic process that leverages information contained on the legacy host systems and enabled Freightliner to redefine its business processes.

As Joanne Turner, general manager for commercial activities at Freightliner, comments, “we were delighted that we were able to deliver a solution within only six weeks of receiving the technical specification from the customer. The roll out process went extremely well and the customer was more than happy that we were able to react within such a short space of time and particularly in the knowledge that we were maintaining our old mainframe system.”

### **From The One To The Many**

The immediate advantage of delivering the solution within the pre-determined time frame was that Freightliner met the needs of its largest customer and retained the business. However, there were other benefits that Freightliner gained by implementing Verastream.

First, it allowed them to add greater value to other clients’ contracts by providing the same real-time reporting functionality to all of its customers.

“We were delighted that we were able to deliver a solution within only six weeks of receiving the technical specification from the customer.”

- Joanne Turner  
General Manager for  
Commercial Activities  
Freightliner

“With Attachmate’s consultancy, Freightliner has since rolled out its real-time reporting on container shipments to all of its customers. It has quickly and cost-effectively enhanced our level of service to all of our customers,” said Thompson.

There have also been HR benefits. Removing the need to manually process information has freed up a huge amount of internal resources. As Turner explains, “the project has been rolled out successfully to many other customers and it has improved our ability to accept more business from them because no one is wasting time

chasing information. It’s given to them electronically, allowing all of us to be much more productive. Being able to do this at a relatively small additional investment has made it a really high-value-for-money product in our view.”

### Meeting Changing Industry Demands

Attachmate’s service-oriented architecture approach not only allowed the solution to be delivered within a very short period of time, but also offered the flexibility to be adapted as further challenges arise. Since 9/11, the industry has seen increased security demands, requiring freight operators to capture seal numbers on containers so that they cannot be tampered with. Freightliner’s system was easily adapted so that this information could be recorded and stored.

The system has proved to be remarkably resilient to the changing demands and requests made upon it. In fact, the Attachmate solution has come to be known internally at Freightliner as “their most reliable employee,” according to Thompson.

This manageable and adaptable system has given Freightliner the confidence to meet customer demands that previously would have caused major IT concerns. Joanne Turner concluded, “Thanks to Verastream, I can assure customers that Freightliner will meet their demands for doing business in new ways.”

### About Attachmate

Attachmate helps businesses extend, manage, and secure their IT investments. We offer a broad range of solutions—from terminal emulation, legacy integration, and PC lifecycle management products to innovative systems and security management tools. With our technology, more than 65,000 customers worldwide are putting their IT assets to work in new and meaningful ways. Learn more at [www.attachmate.com](http://www.attachmate.com).



**Corporate Headquarters**  
1500 Dexter Avenue North  
Seattle, Washington 98109  
TEL 206 217 7500  
800 872 2829  
FAX 206 217 7515

**EMEA Headquarters**  
The Netherlands  
TEL +31 71 368 1100  
FAX +31 71 368 1181

**Asia Pacific Headquarters**  
Australia  
TEL +61 3 9825 2300  
FAX +61 3 9825 2399

**Latin America Headquarters**  
Mexico  
TEL +52 55 9178 4970  
FAX +52 55 5540 4886

WEB [attachmate.com](http://attachmate.com)  
E-MAIL [info@attachmate.com](mailto:info@attachmate.com)

For regional office information, visit [www.attachmate.com](http://www.attachmate.com).