

Case Study

WinRoute: Because it works

“I think this has been a fantastic investment for the Russell Group” Paul Hinds, Transport Director

Paul Hinds is Transport Director at the Russell Group, the west of Scotland based freight and multi-modal transport giant. Paul was directly involved in the group’s recent decision to implement route-planning software to work in conjunction with its existing Transport Management System.

“Basically we decided to look at what was available on the market, and to assess whether we believed it could work for us, and ultimately I guess, whether it could save us money by making our transport planning operations more efficient. We also knew that to cope with any more expansion in the business we would have to recruit more staff into our Transport Office. We thought that maybe the right software package might mean that we didn’t have to do that. “We evaluated what was available and looked more closely at one or two likely candidates, and ultimately we selected WinRoute from Integrated Skills to run a full evaluation of the system and how it might work in our environment. This was because it seemed the easiest to use and to integrate. We are of course a rather unusual case, because rail is a very major part of what we do, though ultimately that simply meant a rather more complex set up than usual.

“We started off looking just at our rigid fleet in Scotland, planning for our 7.5 to 26 tonners, but running the system as back up, relying on the plans that our very experienced transport managers came up with and then subsequently comparing their results with what the WinRoute System proposed. When you look at it, the way WinRoute plans out routes is somewhat counter-intuitive, and is absolutely not done in anything like the way that an experienced planner would do it. But gradually we had to agree that the system worked. Perfectly. And quickly. Coming up with the right routing in a short space of time means that we can be much more flexible, we can cope better with late changes and additions to our scheduling, and it leaves the transport people more time to work on all the other aspects of making sure we satisfy our customers.”

The project at Russell Group started in the middle of 2012 with the installation of the system, initial set up and integration with the existing Transport Management System software and then initial training, and on-going performance evaluation and system tweaking. The WinRoute planning system went live at the start of 2013, and is now in constant use by about a third of the Transport Managers in the company distribution centre in Coatbridge. Paul Hinds explains. “We decided to only bring in a few of our most senior transport managers to trial this product. But the whole point about the WinRoute software is its ease of use. We have also introduced a few of our trainees to the system, and now they can do as good a job as any of our senior people as far as running the WinRoute planning system is



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concerned, which frees-up my senior people for working on things like our driver development programmes. However we have plans now to get all of our planners trained up on the system so that by this time next year ever one will be fully up to speed with the system.”

The company conducted one particular man-v-machine comparison; same loading, same delivery schedule. It turned out that WinRoute only made modest savings on that particular run. The difference however was that WinRoute came up with the route plan in less than half an hour, whereas it took a senior planner three or four hours to come up with the plan for the same route. That’s what makes the difference for the Russell Group. Being able to get accurate planning done much more quickly allows them to cope with demand in a planning office which has now shrunk slightly through natural wastage, to be able to be more flexible, to be able to react better to sudden changes but also be more proactive in terms of managing and developing customer services, and to be comfortable that they will be able to cope with business expansion within their current resources, simply by expanding their use of the WinRoute system.

Paul Hinds has the final word. “I must admit that initially I approached this project with a fair degree of scepticism. I doubted that any computer could out-perform my very experienced team. And of course across the whole range of what we do here our experience and skill remains unsurpassed. But for the route planning portion of our task, WinRoute and Integrated Skills have absolutely convinced me that we made the right decision. The initial set up of the system was relatively complex, but that and the integration with our existing systems went remarkably smoothly and since we went live at the beginning of the year there hasn’t been a single glitch or hiccup. What’s more the people from Integrated Skills who have been working with us have been fantastic. The training and on-site support has been the best I have ever experienced. I think this is because Integrated Skills never tried to hit us with a sales-pitch; it was just transport people talking to transport people and getting things sorted out. I think this has been a fantastic investment for the Russell Group, and I am looking forward to rolling the system out across the entire department over the next twelve months.”

About The Russell Group

The Russell Group (www.johngrussell.co.uk) works in partnership with customers providing cost-effective solutions and services to enhance their supply chain encompassing:

- Domestic and International Transport
- Rail Freight Terminals
- Warehousing and Storage
- Packing and Rework Services

Founded in 1969 John G Russell (Transport) Ltd was brought into life by John Russell. Having already gained a wealth of experience working for his father’s company before making a move to TDG, John launched Russell Transport with just 14 vehicles. 40 years on Russell Logistics has established itself as a market leader, having built an enviable reputation servicing some of Europe’s largest Blue Chip organisations and the world’s strongest brands.

About Integrated Skills Limited

Integrated Skills Limited (www.ukisl.com), operating internationally out of Romsey near Southampton, UK, is a specialist provider of routing and optimisation software solutions as well as environmental consultancy. ISL’s routing and optimisation software solutions improves productivity and maximises efficiency through reductions in fleet size, mileage, planning time/resource and can also be used for scenario planning when introducing new orders, customers, vehicles, routes and services.

WinRoute is just one vehicle routing solution from the extensive portfolio of Canadian based Descartes Systems Group™ (www.descartes-systems.com). ISL is the UK’s leading reseller of Descartes’ vehicle routing and optimisation portfolio which includes Routeplanner™, Routeplanner OnDemand™, RoadShow™, as well as Mobile Working, In-cab and Telematics solutions.

ISL is also a partner of RouteSmart Technologies Inc.™ (www.routesmart.com) for high density, door-by-door and street-by-street route optimisation software.

Further information

For further information contact Alan Paget, Sales Director

