



Route Management Software For Those Who Want To Know

Routing with Handhelds

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Most software programs now provide handheld programs either as part of the system or as an additional module. GBC Advanced Routing includes a very robust handheld program that is compatible with most Pocket PC handhelds. The program and all information reside on the removable card so no information is lost in the event of a hard reset or loss of power.

Handhelds contain the customer information necessary to make a sale and, once set up properly, always give you the correct price for each customer, which products they usually purchase, whether or not they are taxable, and a delivery message for the customer if there is one. Information is also available for off-route deliveries. Payments can be made for each ticket and the driver can choose to pay the amount of this invoice, a previous balance, or the total of this invoice plus the previous balance with one tap of the stylus. The driver designates whether it is cash or check and, if necessary, can change the amount that is automatically entered. Another bonus is the digital signature capture so you can fax a digital copy of the ticket to the customer from the desktop.

Other bells and whistles included in GBC handheld programs are customer statements, previous purchase history for each customer, route resequencing, automatic bottle return calculation, DOT truck check, mileage entry, ability to enter tickets for customers not on the route, add notes on the invoice, and a variety of check in reports so the driver can balance his inventory, sales and cash information. Barcode scanning can be used for truck loading, truck check-in, and equipment transfers, making sure serial numbers are accurate. Equipment transfers are automatically completed when the handheld returns to the warehouse.

Of course, the main accomplishment is the elimination of data entry errors both from the data entry people and the drivers delivering the product. Writing tickets by hand normally produces a number of errors including incorrect customer numbers, addition errors, legibility errors, and whether or not a customer or product is taxable. Errors produce phone calls and time to research and fix the problem. It may also delay payment for those tickets. The time it takes to post tickets/invoices is reduced to minutes instead of hours or even days in some cases. Customer information is always current when using handhelds.

Saving time is another deciding factor in choosing to use handhelds. The primary office time consumed is spent printing tickets for the drivers and entering the tickets upon the drivers return, and then correcting the errors that may have occurred. The GBC Advanced Routing handheld module will save many hours each week and countless frustrations when customers call to point out errors in their tickets (if they were overcharged) or when your office personnel must call the customer to let them know they were undercharged.

Sync is the term used to exchange the data between the handhelds and the computer and is normally accomplished by Cable, Card Reader, or Wireless. Wireless is the fastest since all handhelds can be syncing at the same time and normally takes less than a minute for each one. Card Readers also take less than a minute but must be done one at a time. Cable is the slowest, sometimes taking up to 10 minutes each from a remote location, and several minutes from a local computer.

A typical day for the office personnel using handhelds for the drivers begins with preparing which routes go to the handhelds (30 seconds), sync the handhelds to the computer (time varies but normally 30 seconds or so), and retrieve the tickets already delivered (another 30 seconds). Check the totals and attend to any changes the driver has noted. Print out the equipment transfer report if equipment is being transferred using the handheld and make any adjustments to the customer records if applicable (such as a removing the auto billing charges from a cancelled customer after the equipment is picked up).

Although sometimes drivers are reluctant to begin using handhelds, they normally adapt and learn to appreciate the handheld's ability to calculate their sales and inventory. As with everything new, some drivers adapt very quickly and others take a little longer. Training time for drivers varies between an hour to several days, letting the reluctant driver get used to them more slowly. GBC has a refined method for teaching those reluctant drivers so they get comfortable with it at their own pace.

There is no extra charge to use the GBC handheld program and no extra annual charge per handheld. We believe at GBC that you should have as many handhelds as you need without worrying about whether your annual fee will be increased. Call GBC for more information about our robust program for route deliveries.