

Client Case Study



District Profile

Darla Dicken is the transportation director of Oakwood CUSD #76 in Fithian, IL.

The district consists of 1,050 students who attend one elementary, one junior high and one high school. The district covers 94 square miles and transports 850 students.

Situation

In March 2011 the district purchased Routefinder Pro to upgrade from its manual system. When Routefinder Pro was purchased the current transportation director was planning to retire within the year, so he assigned Darla to learn the routing program. Over the next several months Darla and her assigned Transfinder project manager worked hand in hand to build routes using RouteBuilder GPS units and to place students accurately on the map.

In December of that year all of the routes and student information were loaded into the program and the maps were edited for an accurate view of the district. Using the Routefinder Pro software as opposed to manually routing saved Darla tremendous time in running reports and quickly accessing information she needed. The success of the implementation and the great customer service Darla experienced with Transfinder encouraged her to learn more about the program, so that she could find savings. The Annual Client Conference in Albany, NY was approaching in May and she used it as an opportunity to get hands on training and meet the staff she had worked so closely with as well as network with her peers from across the state and the country.

Solution

The conference offered a range of computer labs and classroom courses designed for new and experienced users, as well as a full day workshop dedicated to best practices in student transportation taught by Dan Roberts, a veteran in student transportation for over 40 years. Darla attended the full day workshop in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of daily operations, from managing drivers to establishing a more safe and efficient operation.



With Transfinder's Annual Client Conference...

Darla Dicken not only brought to her district a greater understanding of how to use the software to improve the overall management of her operations, but also took advantage of the networking opportunity the conference afforded.

Dan provided tools and insight for his participants on how they could use the data they built into Routefinder Pro and utilize the system to analyze it. The benchmarking segment of the class addressed how to use the data that was in the program and explore "what if" scenarios to determine their departments' efficiency and effectiveness. The class was broken up into groups where they worked together to explore scenarios and discussed objectives that could be determined for their departments. When they defined what their objectives were, they then could collect the data to determine how progress should be measured and begin to realize results.

In all, the class was empowering. It gave her the positive reinforcement she needed to return to her district and set benchmarks for progress. It also prepared her for her promotion to transportation director.

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Darla still uses the notes from her classes and continues to incorporate management practices and safety measures she learned in order to continually improve and provide safe and efficient transportation for her students.

Benefits

When Darla returned to her district, she arranged for her drivers to begin taking attendance on their buses and, as she collected the numbers, she could see trends in ridership. Based on the trends she reassigned students to buses and, by the end of December, Darla was able to drop an entire route. By the end of the following year she dropped a second route. As a result she did not have to buy two new buses, which also reduced fuel costs as well as payroll and overtime costs. These reductions amounted to a savings of \$439,000 for her district.