

# Growing Your Company in Changing Times Simply and Affordably

The key to current and future profitability and growth is to integrate dynamic software into your daily operations management. It is important to find the right system for your business that will also grow as you grow.

By Bill Bradley

AS THE WASTE INDUSTRY CONTINUES TO CHANGE AT a rapidly accelerating pace, no business of any size, in any sector can afford to blink. Succeeding now and in the near future requires keeping your eyes wide open. Changes we have seen recently that affect all operators include the high level of merger and acquisition activity, changing ownership of both large and small businesses, and the volatile costs of doing business due to higher fuel and labor costs.

The sure way for any businesses to rise above is to stay focused on one overarching goal: increase efficiency at every level of busi-

ness. To do this requires investing in technology that will allow you to do more, earn more and grow more. For the waste management industry, it means using software solutions that will help you automate routine business operations, monitor key metrics in real time, and provide the instrumentation to make instant changes to seize opportunities and avoid losses. Following are some key considerations that you should keep in mind as you look for software partners to help you drive efficiency and scale your business for long-term profitability.

Starlight's Contractor App lets customers place new or change orders on the jobsite from mobile devices, allowing waste haulers to meet needs instantly and maintain high customer satisfaction ratings.



Easy to create, self-generated reports on key metrics provide in-depth views of where a hauler is gaining or losing efficiency, expenses and profits per business line, unit or customer, and revenue streams.

### **Real-Time Access to Critical Business Data to See Where to Increase Efficiency and Improve Profitability**

Being able to collect, compare, and analyze data across your business lines, inventory, drivers, routes, and even customers is a critical step to driving efficiency and grow your business. Without a dynamic software system, you cannot get a live view of opportunities before they pass, or excessive costs before losses pile up.

The right software solution can show you how much you are spending to service each jobsite, route, or customer based on mileage, fuel, truck costs, and driver compensation, the profits earned or lost per customer, and much more. Data for these business metrics will enable you to see precisely where you are earning or losing profits so you can make changes to protect your bottom line.

You can also monitor which customers pay on time, which pay late, and how much you are spending on billing and payment transactions. It is easy to think that each customer you have represents revenue and profit. However, if you had a way to track all of the time spent in customer support, service delivery, change orders, money lost from late payments, low price contracts, and so on, you may find you are losing money where you thought you were gaining. This alone is one of the most critical reasons for transitioning from paper operations management or antiquated software systems to dynamic software. A robust, live system can show you reports and data in minutes instead of days—time that could be better spent serving your high value customers and selling to qualified leads.

The best operational systems will give you complete visibility to net performance. To truly identify where you are losing or gaining profitability, you need a system that allows you to track in real time your expense information, including truck and driver operating costs, fuel, disposal, insurance, maintenance, taxes, and fees—even overhead, debt service, and depreciation. When reviewing systems for your business, ask suppliers if you can customize your own company's formula with these inputs in a dynamic, real-time system. If so, you can instantly compute profitability by the truck, the route, the driver, the hour, the job, the material, or the customer.

Knowing profitability down to the unit level is essential to maximizing profitability and growth. If you do not have live, real-time access that allows you to track the metrics for efficiency and growth, you are likely driving away from revenue and increased profitability. It is important to ask software suppliers if they provide access to dynamic versus static data and the instrumentation to take action and make instant and live adjustments to driver routes, pricing, billing, inventory management, and other daily activities that impact productivity and profitability.†

### **Ability to Monitor Data and Run Custom Reports 24/7**

A leading complaint among users of waste management software is the long wait for reports from suppliers. While you are waiting days,

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Starlight Software Solutions enables waste haulers to view inventory, driver activity, routes, and more in real time through proprietary solutions that provide the instrumentation to make changes to routes, customer orders, etc. in real time. Images courtesy of Starlight Software Solutions.

or weeks, to see where you can increase efficiencies, your competition with access to their own data in real time, is likely speeding ahead.

Ask every software supplier about your ability to access the data you need and run your own reports versus the wait and/or paying them to run reports for you. Other questions to ask are:

- Can you develop and run reports in a day, or an hour?
- What data can you expect to see and analyze?
- Can you integrate reports with your current enterprise management system to create a comprehensive business intelligence dashboard you can access anytime, anywhere?

## Technology Backed by a Scalable Cloud-Based Infrastructure

There are three distinct technology advantages that drive scalability that you should discuss with software suppliers you are considering.

### #1: Micro Services Architecture

A modern, dynamic ERP system is built using best-in-industry micro services architecture, which automatically scales with your growth. Combine micro services software architecture with hosting at Amazon Web Services and you will have a scalable

infrastructure that provides infinite opportunities. This functionality is key to building a product that can grow as companies grow due to streamlined operations and lower costs that provide extra capital for investment.

It is important to go with a cloud-based system that provides infinite storage, no hardware maintenance headaches, updates, or costs. You will also have faster access to your data anywhere, anytime, which is critical to staying one step ahead of your market.

### #2: Real-Time Design and Real Network Intelligent Endpoints

Your ERP software solution is the Hub-of-the-Wheel that motors your company forward. A properly deployed cloud-based software system has intelligent endpoints, or spokes from the hub that gather data, and process it into actionable insights you can use to assess and improve efficiency, execute, and manage your entire operations and your administrative tasks. Forward-thinking software solutions will offer real-time and network intelligent endpoints that also include customers in your business's ecosystem. Customized apps that let customers interact with your company in real time are one example. Live insight into locations and the status of your assets will help you manage jobs and inventory better so you can address demand immediately.

### #3: Open Systems Architecture

You should also ask about third-party integration for the hardware and software you use daily for in-cab systems, DVIRs, cameras and telematics, scale systems, maintenance, accounting, and other business functions. It is critical that your software supplier support third party endpoints in your network as well as integrate and support their own. That way you become and remain the driver in your business. You decide what third party systems work best for each of your operating needs, capitalizing on the investments you have already made and mixing and matching the future components that are best for your unique business.

Key functionality you should look for as you grow your business includes:

- Streamlined billing processes
- Online ordering for customers and contractors
- Driver apps that enable drivers to communicate easily, share photos, gather and report using telematics, and update routes
- Dynamic self-service reporting
- Mobile responsive features for in-cab communications and updates
- Recurring and adaptable pricing features
- Dispatch, route, and drive productive monitoring
- Master route planning and management
- Material specific tracking, measuring, and reporting
- Customer portals for order, invoice tracking, and scheduling
- Camera integration
- Sensor integration – vehicle data hub
- Analytics – data extraction, data cubes, BI visualization, role-based dashboards
- Simple integration with APIs and Connectors

You need to look for a software system that was made with your specific sector in mind. Is the system optimized for roll-off? Commercial or residential? Portable toilet? Recycling, transfer station or landfill? Or all of the above? What about recycling metrics and municipal compliance? It is also smart if you can find a system that is set up to serve your growth and move you into new business lines.

Finding a system designed by haulers, recyclers, and operators will likely have all the elements needed to resolve your pain points as the developers have experienced what you are experiencing and likely have matched technology to specific issues.

### Purchasing Considerations

Once you find a software system that provides you with the real-time management functionality, and daily functionality needed to optimize your operations, you need to compare total and long-term value of each vendor you are considering. Beyond fees for each license, user, or truck in your systems, you need to look at fees for:

- **Implementation:** Cost to provision the new software with your

current data, train your team, and configure and customize the new solution so the migration from your current ERP system goes well,

- **Support:** Do you need to pay for customer support for troubleshooting, training, or report generation? To get ongoing consulting and configuration help? Or are these items covered in your monthly subscription fees? You need to know if there are support services you pay for, and if there is a threshold for “free” support you need to be under in order to avoid extra fees.
- **Reports:** If your system does not enable self-service reporting with the ability to allow you to drag and drop data into report fields and allow you to access and monitor your own data, you may have to pay big fees for every data pull and/or report you ask for, and you may have to wait weeks or longer to get it. If you want to monitor each business unit’s profit or loss for various time periods, individual customer costs and revenue, and so on, the fees for each data pull and report can add up quickly.

If you have to pay for support, data pulls, and reports, these can dramatically wipe out any savings you might have incurred with a lower monthly subscription fee than others you considered. You must factor in the cost of time and opportunity associated with having to wait for a supplier to pull your data and send it to you for your review. For some suppliers in the waste management software space, this can mean weeks.

In conclusion, the key to current and future profitability and growth is to integrate dynamic software into your daily operations management. It is important to find the right system for your business that will also grow as you grow. Cloud-based systems will provide infinite data storage and dynamic software features that will enable you to monitor and make instant changes to inventory, driver routes, jobsites, and more, helping you avoid losses or capture new opportunities. |

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*Bill Bradley is CEO and Founder of Starlight Software Solutions. He joined the waste management industry after serving as a CEO of a NASDAQ software company and working in financial services. He purchased a roll-off company in the Denver area and quickly grew it to one of the largest businesses in the region. When he could not find a software solution that met his needs for his 30-plus truck roll-off business in Colorado, he started Starlight Software Solutions. His vision for a comprehensive, yet simple tool for real-time monitoring of key metrics and the ability to adapt instantly to seize opportunities or avoid losses is helping haulers of all sizes substantially increase productivity and profitability.*

*Starlight Software Solutions is an industry leader in cloud-based, robust software solutions serving waste management haulers in roll-off, commercial, residential, portable toilet, and recycling and facility services. Customers have realized increased profits of 25 percent or more from achieving greater efficiencies and capturing lost revenue across operations. For more information, visit [www.starlightsoftwaresolutions.com](http://www.starlightsoftwaresolutions.com).*

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