

Great Lakes Aggregates Stays Inside

Simple Process Improvements – Like Making Sure Truck Drivers Stay Inside Their Cabs – Increases The Productivity And Safety Of Bulk Materials Sites.

By Mark S. Kuhar

We all know the saying “time is money.” Businesses can achieve several financial and operational advantages from streamlining operations, such as reducing costs, attracting more customers through faster response and delivery times, increasing profits, and outsmarting the competition.

While all of these are major value points of operational efficiencies, now more than ever, being able to streamline operations significantly impacts the ability to keep yourself and your customers safe. Simple process improvements – like making sure truck drivers stay inside their cabs – increases the productivity and safety of bulk materials sites.

Challenge

Great Lakes Aggregates LLC was established in 2003 as a

mining and concrete-recycling company in southeastern Michigan. It supplies limestone and crushed concrete to major infrastructure jobs, as well as some commercial and residential work.

Great Lakes Aggregates is always trying to find new ways to provide great service and customer experience by providing a seamless process flow. The company sees this as a mutually beneficial relationship. If it can get customers on the road quicker, the jobsites get their materials quicker, and the driver can pick up an extra load or two per day.

It’s a victory all around; and, because of the system Great Lakes Aggregates has in place, its customer load time from the moment they enter the premises to the point of receiving their load ticket has never been faster.



How is this possible? The company implemented Apex scale ticketing combined with an Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR) at its locations.

"We haven't even had the system for a year, and we've already expanded this technology to two additional locations – that's how quickly we were able to see results. With the help and support of Command Alkon, we were able to vastly improve upon our operations, and our customer service is only one of the many focal points that has benefitted from these upgrade," said Jordan Stol, equipment director at Great Lakes Aggregates.

Solution

The scale-ticketing system eliminates the common issues of handwritten errors, misplaced tickets and handwriting recognition challenges. It also results in greater time and labor savings while improving data accuracy.

Point-of-sale modules interface directly with the quoting, dispatch, transportation management, and back-office modules to ensure timely and accurate information flow.

When combining the scale ticketing system with site automation technologies, the process has streamlined the amount of time the customer vehicles are on the premises. The ALPR cameras further expedite the process for Great Lakes Aggregates' customers by streamlining the entire process starting with checking in to weighing out with a load ticket.

Once on site, the vehicle is identified in the Apex system once it passes the check-in ALPR camera, this is confirmed by displaying a "green light" to direct the driver to proceed towards the material loading zones.

A driver can confirm his assignment with the scale operator through radio contact or utilizing an auto check-in lane if repeating previously ticketed job and product information. Once confirmed, the system will capture the tare weight and communicate the customer ID and target weights to the entire Apex loadout system.

The system will update remote displays for the scale operator as well as each customer service loader allowing the view of ticketing information, the required material, and time in yard metrics.

The loader operator uses their Wireless Loader program to view all vehicles onsite to be loaded. The program provides all the information needed to load the vehicles from a portable tablet mounted inside the cab of the customer service loaders.

After being loaded, the customer vehicle proceeds towards the outbound scale where the vehicle's license plate is read again. The system captures the gross weight and initiates a "green light" for the driver signaling the load ticket is printing

to the remote printer kiosk for their retrieval.

Results

With its implemented systems, Great Lakes Aggregates can create various reports and analyze the data with ease. They've learned that with Apex, about 95% of their customer haul trucks are fully automated, meaning the customer can use the check-in express lanes, be loaded with the appropriate materials, and receive a load out ticket without having to speak to any employees.

"Changing the industry for the better takes a lot of hard work. Command Alkon has consistently proven to us that they are up for the challenge," said Jordan Stol.

Speaking of challenges, in the face of a crisis – like COVID-19 – the ability to enter and leave the quarry premises without human interaction is an extremely valuable piece in keeping essential construction projects going. Great Lakes Aggregates sites can be unmanned by operating with remote ticketing capabilities. This allows their employees to see each and every truck that enters all of their locations with their ALPR technology.

With the Wireless Loader, the operators see all of the loading information required. This eliminates lost drivers without any means of communication needing to wave down an operator and climb up toward their cab to tell them what material they want and how much. The wireless loader ensures every driver stays inside their vehicle, which is huge for safety even without a pandemic.

Another feature that enables Great Lakes Aggregates to practice social distancing is that in the very rare case there is an issue with a ticket printed at the kiosk, the scale operator can easily fix the ticket and send it right back to the designated printer kiosk without the driver having to turn in the incorrect ticket or walk into the scale house to have it corrected.

Great Lakes Aggregates is currently in the process of getting CONNEX Connected to take advantage of Free eTicketing Essentials for the rest of the year. With this offer, the company can provide material ticket data via the cloud.

This eliminates the handling of paper tickets, and easily provides a way for the office or jobsite foremen to view the tickets on their own computers, tablets or phones. The onboarding process is very easy, and the company has already invited 10 of its main customers to get CONNEX Connected to receive material tickets digitally.

While these times are uncertain, Great Lakes Aggregates has peace of mind knowing its employees can remain safe while continuing to practice social distancing with Apex at work. ▲

Information for this article courtesy of Command Alkon.