

Transportation Management Solutions

The Organization

Modern Woodmen of America: Insurance provider uses multi-carrier shipping and tracking solution for efficient deliveries to agents

Modern Woodmen of America is the nation's fifth largest fraternal life insurance society. The organization was founded in 1883 and today provides life insurance and annuity products for more than 750,000 diverse members throughout the US. Its members demonstrate their fraternal spirit through camp activities and a variety of social, civic, education and fraternal programs designed to bring families together.

Founder Joseph Cullen Root chose the name "Modern Woodmen" when a minister described the work of the "pioneer woodmen clearing away the forest." Root felt this was a fine analogy for the task of eliminating a family's financial burdens in the event of a death.

Modern Woodmen's life insurance policies in force total \$26.6 billion. But as a not-for-profit organization, it has a special imperative to demonstrate fiscal and fiduciary responsibility to its members in every cost center—including shipping and warehouse management. Cost efficiencies and productivity are never far from the thoughts of Dennis Overturf, shipping supervisor at Modern Woodmen's Rock Island, Illinois headquarters.

The Challenge

"We spend over \$400,000 annually on small parcel shipments from our warehouse here—that's the bulk of our shipments," says Overturf. "Most of our shipments are insurance forms, policies, and related materials to our 1,800 agents around the country. We also ship some unusual items—from golf balls to lawn chairs—that are sent as prizes for various social events." Overturf uses two carriers for the small parcel shipments: UPS and USPS. And, until two years ago, Modern Woodmen relied on an aging MOS International system for its manifest applications. Then UPS began requiring package level detail (PLD) files. "Our system wasn't capable of producing those files, and it couldn't be upgraded, so we knew we had to do something," he recalls.

PB Solution: Ascent

After analyzing four different shipping systems, Overturf felt that Pitney Bowes' Ascent™ offered the best combination of features and value. Modern Woodmen now relies on Ascent to process and track the shipment of approximately 350 small parcels per day. "Ascent has been great for us," says Overturf. "I like the fact that it's a multi-carrier system. Now we don't need to waste time and space using two different carrier processing systems."

Ascent is Pitney Bowes' integrated, multi-carrier shipping solution that fully supports online carrier automation including UPS, USPS, RPS, FedEx, AirBorne Plus, and DHL. Ascent users benefit from fast electronic connectivity to carriers, along with required barcode labels, at-a-glance delivery criteria, email shipment notification, electronic package tracking, and a wide variety of reporting tools.

(continued next page)

The Benefits of Ascent



Ascent is integrated with Modern Woodmen's own custom-designed warehouse management system—an internally developed program that's tied into the organization's main database. When an order is received by the warehouse management system, it removes the items from inventory, prints out a shipping order, and automatically generates a reorder notice.

The fact that Ascent is easy to customize was a big selling point for Modern Woodmen, too. Says Overturf, "Our agent data is stored in our mainframe database. We wanted Ascent to access that data to retrieve agent barcode information for package scanning—without allowing outside access to that same information. Ascent made it easy to do by customizing our shipping screens."

Now the shipping department can print shipping orders with PDF bar codes and scan the coded information to meet UPS labeling requirements. Overturf uses Ascent to customize batch work, too. "Sometimes we have 400 identical packages going to 400 different addresses. By importing a disk, we can quickly generate 400 shipping labels, and we don't have to scan each one. It's a big time saver."

Modern Woodmen also puts Ascent's reporting features to work. A variety of reports help the department monitor and control shipping volume and costs, as well as carrier performance. "We've customized reports to break down the number of packages and shipping costs daily, by department," says Overturf. "Then I download that report to our mainframe for departmental billing. It's very efficient."

Overturf uses another report to track carrier performance. "I always need convincing that carriers are in fact meeting their promised delivery dates," says Overturf. Ascent provides automated carrier package tracking through online connections with carriers. The reports provide the proof Modern Woodmen needs to obtain reimbursements when packages are delivered late. "We've practically paid for the system with the money we've recovered on shipping costs," he says.

"Ascent has worked very well for us," says Overturf. "It's saving us time and money—and our Pitney Bowes' rep has been great."

About Pitney Bowes

Pitney Bowes Inc. is a \$4.0 billion global provider of integrated mail and document management solutions headquartered in Stamford, Connecticut. The company serves over 2 million businesses of all sizes in more than 130 countries through dealer and direct operations. The Pitney Bowes Mail Management division, formerly Pitney Bowes TranScape, delivers leading edge, integrated, global solutions that manage the information surrounding the movement of documents and packages for customers of all sizes. Pitney Bowes' growth and success are integrally tied to an exciting, invigorating culture in which innovation, research and development, diversity, community support, and volunteerism are encouraged and rewarded. As a result, the company has been favorably profiled and acknowledged in numerous business-related books and major magazines as being a great place to work and build a career, especially for women and minorities.



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