It's Time for the Transportation Industry to Go Rugged
Here Are the Top 5 Reasons Why

By Kyocera International

The transportation industry relies on moving parts. Trains, trucks, vans and planes simultaneously move people and goods across the country and the globe. But to successfully execute transportation, a mastery of time and logistics is crucial. A single mechanical malfunction, human error or weather incident can set dominoes in motion that can have far-reaching, negative effects on an entire operation.

The transportation industry was an early pioneer in mobile-communications technology. From shipping companies like UPS and FedEx to regional railways and trucking operations, communications and logistics are keys to successful operations. It's no surprise that the industry was an early adopter of technology. Early adoption, however, didn't come cheap.

In the young days of mobile technology, implementing new systems, adopting new technologies and purchasing new equipment was expensive. Additionally, the infant technology grew in leaps and bounds, forcing the industry to keep up with rapid changes. The early investment paid off. Despite the high costs, the transportation industry helped spark a revolution in logistics and communication optimization – and helped mobile technology experience a revolution of its own.

Ironically, many of those early adopters now lag in the adoption of today's emerging mobile solutions, such as rugged devices. Modern mobile technology can mitigate critical issues and optimize logistics, but it is often delicate – prone to damage and unreliability. Transportation is a rugged business that demands rugged technology. As rugged mobile technology experiences an evolution and becomes more prominently used by various industries, it's time for the transportation industry to follow suit and go rugged as well.

Here are 5 reasons why:

1. Dynamically Track Vehicles and Cargo

Fleet management - the ability to track shipments, minimize risk, improve efficiency and update schedules – has moved beyond estimation and assumption. Mobile serves as more than a simple communication device; now it is a full-blown data and logistics powerhouse. Packages can be tracked throughout their entire journey, and mass-transit schedules can be predicted down to the second. Cloud-based information hubs work dynamically with mobile devices to create a central, intelligent system that identifies opportunities for optimization – and capitalizes on them.

This central system, however, is dependent on the individual parts working together – including mobile devices. Most mobile devices are delicate and prone to damage from dirt, drops,

temperature and water. That's where rugged comes in. Built to meet military standards for ruggedness, manufacturers like Kyocera offer a full line of both personal and commercial rugged devices that ensure cargo and transit arrive on time and uninterrupted. Running fleet-management solutions, rugged devices can help transportation companies quickly identify and respond to potential issues and undertake key maintenance tasks, from any location.

2. ROI

The transportation industry – like every industry – expects return on investment for every product or service it purchases. Rugged technology and communication systems have traditionally carried a heavy price tag – but times have changed. The rise of rugged has led to lower costs for rugged devices for both consumers and enterprises. According to VDC Research, the overall market for hazardous-rated-certified rugged handheld and tablet mobile computers was estimated at almost $70 million in 2015 and is forecasted to reach $111 million by 2019.

This rapid adoption of rugged mobile technology has created opportunities for both new industries to take advantage of the efficiencies mobile offers, and for established industries like transportation to take advantage of rugged technology with the benefit of expedited ROI. With new mobile services, solutions and applications that offer more efficient, exact tracking mechanisms to accurately predict deliveries, record routes and track drivers, coupled with a lower total cost of ownership for the rugged mobile devices themselves, transportation companies using rugged devices come out on top.

Mobile technologies like Push-To-Talk (PTT) can simplify operations and cost savings, and applications like Google Maps offer a navigational route overview, which is especially effective for drivers on larger-screen rugged devices. As the Department of Transportation releases new transportation regulations and requirements, mobile devices can easily unlock and add new applications to have drivers and companies quickly and effortlessly comply.

3. Meets Electronic Logging Device (ELD) Mandate

In an effort to boost safety for both truck drivers and those with whom they share the road, new Department of Transportation (DoT) "hours of service" (HoS) regulations limit how much truck drivers drive, and when they drive. These requirements detail the length of time truckers can drive in a single day and single week, and when they must take mandatory breaks. As of February 2016, fleets are required to use electronic logging devices (ELD) to report hours of service. While ELDs will help save millions over paper-based reporting in the long term, the initial investment poses a challenge for fleets. Fixed hardware ELDs are effective, but can be expensive and limiting.

That's where rugged mobile devices come in. Rugged mobile devices that double as ELDs reduce initial investment for fleets, and allow for adaptability going forward. With fixed ELDs, fleets run the risk of having to undergo changes in process and equipment every few years as technology evolves.

Rugged mobile devices are multi-functional and familiar – truckers won't have to get used to new systems and processes – and are the perfect vehicle to easily incorporate new technology and new reporting regulations as they emerge. For example, Kyocera customer Success Logistics utilizes the GeoTab Drive mobile software solution -- an all-in-one driver platform for Hours of Service, Driver Vehicle Inspection Recording and Driver ID -- on a Kyocera DuraForce XD rugged smartphone, which offers a larger screen for the driver that is usable with wet hands or with gloves on. Rugged mobile devices can perform ELD and communication functions, and operate in the often-harsh environments that truckers experience.

4. Agility

The emergence of logistics solutions, coupled with expanding cities and new regions of operation, have created an opportunity for the transportation industry to rethink how it does business, reallocate its assets to capture larger market share, and rethink its technology to optimize its operations. Rugged mobile devices can serve as a conduit for new strategies and technologies, and help companies be agile with resource allocation. Rugged devices from Kyocera are compatible with most Android and cloud-based logistics programs, and can help transportation organizations quickly pivot from an outdated approach to new strategies.

Just about every American is intimately familiar with mobile devices. Using these devices to execute information and logistics programs eliminates the lengthy learning process normally associated with shifts in strategy and platform. Rugged mobile also allows for seamless shifts in future strategy, so that transportation organizations can identify and exploit opportunities in the market at the moment they occur. And the best rugged devices come with Military Standard 810G certification, so that drivers are ensured that the device is protected wherever they may be traveling – against dust, shock, vibration, temperature extremes, blowing rain, solar radiation, salt fog, humidity, water immersion.

5. Value

The world is simultaneously growing and shrinking. Populations are growing and cities and suburbs are expanding – but information and access is attainable in an instant for more people. These competing realities are forcing the transportation industry to identify and create value in an atmosphere of enhanced competition. Whether it's a government transit organization or a private shipping company, competition is on the rise, forcing organizations to react. Rugged mobile devices are a simple, cost-effective and reliable solution that will help transportation organizations make the transformation to a fully digital environment, and take advantage of the opportunities that real-time information can provide. Drivers need devices that are reliable, durable and constantly connected to provide information at the touch of a finger. That means battery life of rugged devices is a very important benefit when it comes to transportation – the drivers are on the road for long stretches and need constant power and connectivity.

The transportation industry is driving forward at a rapid pace, with new regulations, innovations and technologies around every corner. Rugged mobile devices can help transportation companies and drivers stay a step ahead, especially when it comes to fleet management, hours of service tracking, ROI, agility and value – and focus on the changes to come.

Kyocera International (https://americas.kyocera.com) is a world-leading electronic device manufacturer.