



WHY eBILLING IS eASIER THAN EVER

Electronic billing can greatly improve costs by cutting DSO and streamlining the data flow.

By Ron DeRosa, Contributing Editor

Illustration by Brian Danaher

How do you distribute your freight invoices to bill your customers? How do you manage the volumes of paper created each day from bills-of-lading, proofs-of-delivery and other supporting documents, and how difficult is it to match them with the corresponding invoice? If you're like most freight operations, you end up with overwhelmed personnel, a desire to improve customer service, and high printing and mailing costs.

One of the ways that freight companies are cutting costs and reducing their Daily Sales Outstanding (DSO) at the same time is with e-Billing. A component of electronic document imaging, e-Billing allows freight companies to distribute freight invoices or bills and other supporting customer documents automatically through their Web site, e-mail or fax.

E-Billing enables you to move billing documents securely and automatically from your billing system to your customer's desktop. Invoices are generated through your billing system and electronically transferred to the imaging system for forwarding. The imaging system will match documents with the electronic invoice and automatically distribute them to your customers.

With e-Billing, reducing your DSO, improving customer service and helping your personnel resurface from underneath a mountain of paper statements is all achievable.

You may be apprehensive to implement e-Billing into your freight company, with visions of costly technology overhauls and NASA-like training for your personnel dancing in your head. But the good news is that e-Billing modules are becoming more available and affordable. The trick is to find a solution provider that can integrate with your existing infrastructure.

With e-Billing, freight company customers can view and print statements, bills and proofs-of-delivery right from their desktop – eliminating mail costs and speeding up when the customer receives their bill.

Take, for example, Towne Air Freight, a full-service parcel and cargo company based in South Bend, Ind. Towne Air went paperless with a cost-effective document imaging solution and implemented e-Billing that gives its customers the choice of how to receive their statements and freight bills – by mail, automatic fax, e-mail or via Towne Air's Web site.

Towne Air reduced its Daily Sales Outstanding by 37% – from 71 days to 44.6 days – through a combined effort of document imaging and their collections department. With the e-Billing feature, Towne is able

to automatically distribute statements and supporting documents to its customers faster than ever before, speeding up the payment process.

"We needed a document management and e-Billing solution that would allow us to quickly access and distribute our customer information and seamlessly integrate with our existing IBM AS/400 platform," said Steve Downey, CIO for Towne Air. "We did not, however, have a lot of time to put a solution in place. We needed it fast and implemented correctly the first time around."

Averitt Express, a full-service freight transportation and logistics provider and Towne Air customer since 1994, uses the e-Billing feature to access their billing documents online each day.

"If I need to locate a specific bill, I can plug in the search criteria to locate it instantly from Towne's Web site, rather than digging through

a pile of paper statements," said Bobby Taylor, traffic and interline leader for Averitt Express. "We've reduced our printing and storage costs, and we don't have to worry about statements getting lost in the mail, because all of the information is online."

E-Billing also helps build relationships. By more quickly facilitating the payment process, the transition from service to payment can be a smooth one. And since the customer has more control

of how they receive the information, there is less chance that they will report missing or lost bills.

"Providing exceptional customer service is one of our main priorities," said Downey. "With e-Billing, we're able to offer our customers a variety of formats of how they want to receive their bills from us. It's just one more way that we try to streamline the process for our customers."

If you're still not sure whether or not e-Billing is right for your organization, ask yourself these questions:

- ▶ Can you stand to save money on your printing and mailing costs?
- ▶ What's it worth to you to give your customers more than one way to access their bills?
- ▶ Is it important to you to make it easier for your customers to do business with you?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then it may be time to investigate whether or not e-Billing can work for you. With the right solution provider, it may be easier than you think. T3

Ron DeRosa is Vice President of Sales of Comsquared Systems. Comsquared Systems is a document imaging software developer, systems integrator and consulting organization based in Atlanta, which specializes in implementing document imaging and e-Billing solutions for the freight industry. For more information, visit its Web site at www.comsquared.com.

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