



SUCCESS STORY FOR LOGISTICS

Crete Carrier Corporation

Crete Carrier revolutionizes its logistics operations with robotic process automation, powered by Kofax Kapow™. Streamlined scheduling allows the company to get ahead of competitors to secure prime delivery slots—improving on-time delivery rates and saving time and costs—while freeing staff from tedious manual work to focus on building better relationships with customers.

Challenge

In just 50 years, Crete Carrier has blossomed into one of America’s leading trucking companies, providing transportation services for industry giants such as Wal-Mart, Lowe’s, ConAgra Foods, and Kimberly-Clark.

Crete Carrier aims to deliver the very best service for its customers, whatever their size. With operations spanning three divisions, dozens of facilities and tens of thousands of vehicles, keeping the wheels of business turning smoothly takes considerable effort.

Matt Schnake, Website Integration Administrator at Crete Carrier Corporation, began, “Our customers count on us to deliver their freight safely and on time. And appointment scheduling plays a crucial role in helping us to achieve this. When a customer makes a request, our teams need to take into account a host of factors in order to ensure we can deliver the order on time and in the most cost-efficient way. Our representatives need to consider how many miles of transit there are from the pickup point to the destination, which vehicles and drivers we have available at a certain time at each facility, and whether the customer is available to receive a shipment during the hours we can deliver. It’s a very labor-intensive process, and we found that as business grew, it was becoming increasingly difficult for teams to keep up with the sheet amount of work that went into scheduling deliveries.”

Jim King, Website Integration Administrator at Crete Carrier Corporation, continued, “Our trucking services run 24/7, but the people who were tasked with scheduling appointments by and



Crete Carrier Corporation is one of the largest privately owned trucking companies in the US, providing a range of dry-van, refrigerated-items, flatbed and specialized transportation services. Headquartered in Lincoln, Nebraska, Crete Carrier Corporation operates 18 facilities across the country and employs approximately 6,000 people.

Products in Use:

- ◆ Kofax Kapow™

Focus: Robotic Process Automation

“We have one client who evaluates our service against a variety of metrics, including estimated time of arrival [ETA] conformance. After introducing Kapow to automate delivery status tracking, we have increased ETA conformance to 99.9 percent. Our client is delighted with the improvement and has told us that we’re performing better than any of their other freight carriers.”

Matt Schnake, Website Integration Administrator,
Crete Carrier Corporation

large worked Monday through Friday. This meant that if we received a tender on the weekend, it would sit there until a representative got into work on Monday. This was potentially causing us to miss opportunities: there are only so many delivery slots available on a particular day and the longer we take to schedule an appointment, the less likely it is that we can make a customer's preferred timeframe. Also, if we fail to respond to a customer request promptly, they could potentially take their business to another provider."

Keen to ease the pressure on its staff and maintain its high rate of on-time deliveries, Crete Carrier set out to find a solution that could help it to manage appointment scheduling more effectively.

Solution

Crete Carrier's search led it to Kofax Kapow—a powerful robotic process automation platform. Using Kapow, the company has built hundreds of intelligent software robotic processes that streamline various process oriented tasks involving internal systems and external portals.

Schnake commented, "We've been using Kofax Kapow for almost four years now and are currently running 467 robots running more than 1 million robot executions yearly with a runtime of more than 13,000 robot hours. 24 additional robots are currently in our design queue. We have just three people looking after the Kofax solutions—the robots are very easy to configure, and once we've deployed one, it pretty much manages itself."

For appointment scheduling, Crete Carrier prepares Kapow robots with a range of information, including the pickup and drop-off points, shipment distance and desired delivery timeframe. When the company receives a new tender, Kapow robots uses these parameters to pick an appropriate delivery slot. If the solution is unable to fix an appointment on its first run, it will extract all the information it has received and send it to a human operator, who can establish a new set of parameters and instruct a Kapow robot to re-attempt delivery scheduling.

King said, "Typically, Kofax Kapow will be able to schedule an appointment on its first run, but if our criteria are too tight or if there is any other issue, our representatives can step in and work with Kapow to establish a delivery slot on the fly. It's a much faster and flexible approach.

"And because Kapow works round the clock, in most cases we can give customers a delivery appointment very quickly, even if it is outside normal office hours. This helps us avoid evening and weekend lag time, and deliver more reliable and responsive service."

"Robotic process automation is not about replacing jobs, it's about letting people focus on value-add work. This adds up to a better experience for customers—as they receive more personal and responsive service—and a more efficient way for Crete Carrier to run the business."

Jim King, Website Integration Administrator,
Crete Carrier Corporation

Smarter shipment tracking

In addition, Crete Carrier harnesses Kapow to enhance visibility into freight as it moves across the country. With a near-real-time view of the position of trucks and trailers, as well as their loads, the company can keep deliveries moving in a much more controlled and efficient way.

King explained, "In the past, teams would have to go through stacks of emails with logistics partners and customers to see which goods were loaded or unloaded at various points in a shipment journey, and where different vehicles were at a given point in time. Sometimes, we even had to send drivers out to different facilities to check if a particular vehicle was available—wasting fuel and time that the driver could otherwise be spending delivering an order to a customer.

"Today, we use Kofax Kapow robots to read through all those emails and confirm the current location and load status of a particular vehicle. The solution has considerably improved our ability to know where our equipment is and what state it's in, so we can plan our operations more accurately. Plus, we no longer have to send drivers out to check on the status of a vehicle, saving time and money to help Crete Carrier run more efficiently."

Keeping customers up-to-date

Crete Carrier's customers are also reaping the benefits of improved freight tracking.

Schnake noted: "We provide delivery information and updates to certain clients via dedicated web portals. In the past, staff updated the portal information manually, which was time-consuming and caused delays in information delivery, particularly outside of office hours. Clients knew that the web portals were not always up-to-date, so they often called our customer service team to ask about their deliveries, creating more work for our representatives.

“Today, that has all changed—Kofax Kapow robots updates the web portals with delivery information automatically and in real time, eliminating tedious manual work for employees and helping clients keep a close eye on their orders.

“In fact, we have one client who evaluates our service against a variety of metrics, including estimated time of arrival [ETA] conformance. Previously, we were sitting at about 15.4 percent ETA conformance; after introducing Kapow to automate delivery status tracking, we have increased this to 99.9 percent. Our client is delighted with the improvement and has told us that we’re performing better than any of their other freight carriers.”

The improved insight into shipments is opening up valuable opportunities for Crete Carrier to service new kinds of business.

King gave an example, “We have some clients who deliver direct to their end-customers—a much more sensitive and time-critical task than standard business-to-business shipping. As we’ve been able to show that we can proactively communicate where orders are at every stage of a delivery, our clients feel confident entrusting us with more critical shipments.”

Extending the benefits

Spurred by the increased efficiencies that Kapow has brought to delivery and logistics management, Crete Carrier has subsequently introduced the solution to many other departments, including road services, billing and recruiting.

Schnake recalled, “At first it was difficult to get buy-in for Kapow from our users; people were scared that the robots were going to steal their jobs. But once staff saw the solution in action and understood that it was there to help them, rather than replace them, they couldn’t get enough of it. Kapow has delivered enormous value to our business and we keep finding new ways to get more out of the solution.”

Results

By automating the complicated and time-consuming task of appointment scheduling, Crete Carrier can secure optimal delivery slots—boosting its chances of getting orders to customers on time and via the most cost-effective routes.

Schnake stated, “Kofax Kapow has transformed scheduling into a much more streamlined and efficient process. When staff had to rely on manual methods to schedule deliveries, there was a limit to the number of appointments they could realistically set

up in a working day. As a result, we were largely confined to scheduling deliveries a day or two ahead of time, which meant that we were potentially missing out on securing better delivery slots that might have been available further down the line.

“With Kapow, there are no longer any constraints around scheduling. Unlike human operators, the robots can run 24/7 without breaks. This means that as soon as a new tender comes in we can get right down to fixing a delivery slot. And what’s more, Kapow is able to schedule appointments weeks and even months in advance if we have orders than can be booked that far ahead of time.”

He continued, “Now that we can schedule appointments much further in advance, it allows us to get out ahead of other freight carriers and cherry pick the delivery slots that fit all of our criteria as best as possible, instead of having to compromise on what’s left over. This maximizes our odds of securing appointments that help us meet our delivery time targets and enable us to make the most effective use of our trucks and drivers. For instance, if an order comes in that requires pick-up in Cincinnati, and we already have a driver making a delivery close by, we can slot in that additional appointment and get the driver to make the pick-up straight after. This saves fuel and time in transit, and can help us to deliver orders faster—a win-win situation.”

Crete Carrier estimates that Kapow schedules between 40 to 50 percent of appointments in a completely automated way, with no need for human intervention. By freeing staff from this tedious work, the company is empowering teams to refocus their efforts on more strategic activities.

King concluded, “Thanks to Kofax Kapow, our representatives spend much less of their day dealing with routine tasks, so they have more time to dedicate to customer-facing services. This is the beauty of robotic process automation—it’s not about replacing jobs, it’s about letting people focus on value-add work. In our case, that means building closer relationships with our customers; for example, they might be able to meet a client, which previously they may not have had time to do. All of this adds up to a better experience for customers—as they receive more personal and responsive service—and a more efficient way for Crete Carrier to run the business, helping us stay on the road to continued success.”

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