

Web services offer contract hire benefits



Contract hire companies could strengthen customer relationships, increase transparency and improve efficiencies by using web-enabled technology solutions integrated within their back office, but many shy away from doing so because of the perceived cost involved.

Others are investing heavily in systems but they are doing so by 'bolting on' web modules to their old legacy systems, an expensive and often short-term approach that does not deliver the transparent, fully integrated, end-to-end solutions that fleet managers are now demanding.

It's time to take a different approach, says leading global fleet software supplier, Sofico, whose systems manage around 700,000 vehicles globally for companies such as ALD Automotive, BMW Financial Services, Daimler Fleet Management, GE Commercial Finance Fleet Services and PSA Finance.

Roger Smith, head of Sofico UK, says that leasing companies need to embrace web-based technologies to deliver the service levels that fleet managers are looking for.

"There are major advantages for leasing companies and their customers in investing in the latest generation of web-enabled leasing solutions. To begin with, leasing companies don't need to duplicate the coding and data sets that they need for their back office and their websites.

"One set increases efficiencies, cuts administration and drastically increases the level of services and speed of response that are available to the customer."

Nor should cost be a barrier to entry, says Smith. "Not everyone is a top five company with huge IT budgets. Players at the lower end of the FN50 league table could immediately emulate the degree of functionality that the more costly systems deliver by investing in our 'out-of-the-box' solutions, which have been developed to meet the needs of UK leasing companies, for a fraction of the price."

Key to this is the second generation Miles software system which Sofico recently launched in the UK and about which it is in discussions

with a number of leading leasing companies.

Miles' web facilities are fully integrated with the back office, allowing the leasing company to interact with and support its customers in real time. For example, a quotation can be authorised on the web by a fleet manager, received by the leasing company back office and progressed into purchasing within literally minutes. The web channel can also be linked into Miles Workflow to further optimise processes.

Miles also allows a customisable fleet manager portal to be set up for each end user fleet, which uses a highly visual dashboard approach and a variety of widgets to enable the fleet manager to review a host of fleet information and follow up fleet items requiring attention.

Importantly all Miles functionality can be web delivered, allowing a leasing company to easily tailor specific market offerings, such as driver sales, and support customer specific requirements without any of the restrictions, typically development cost and speed to market, associated with legacy systems.

"Since our launch in the UK, we have received extremely positive feedback from leasing companies who have viewed Miles in product demonstrations. This has only served to strengthen our view that we have the best software system with the best functionality for leasing companies," added Roger Smith.



The Miles fleet manager portal

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