

Directions

FROM **PARAGON SOFTWARE SYSTEMS PLC**
LEADERS IN COMPUTERISED VEHICLE ROUTING AND SCHEDULING

Fleet Controller adds real time monitoring to Paragon

The launch of **Fleet Controller**, enabling Paragon to be linked with in-cab systems, puts transport managers in control by adding the benefits of real-time monitoring, route modification and planned versus actual performance reporting to the efficiencies already secured by the system's schedules and routes.

With market demand for tighter management control centring on vehicle visibility, Paragon saw the need for a flexible monitoring module enabling operations of any size to optimise the execution of Paragon's plans. By recording and tracking vehicle activity as it happens, Fleet Controller equips transport managers with accurate information enabling them to replan routes to overcome problems, provide pro-active customer service and achieve consistent performance.

Real-time fleet positioning

The module processes information from the in-cab system, automatically flagging up problem routes and highlighting, for example, where time windows will be missed or routes are off schedule. Users can then zoom in on a particular route, visualising a vehicle's exact location and comparing actual versus planned timings. They can then revise the plan by re-sequencing or moving calls from trip to trip, with the modified



Fleet Controller highlights in red both on the map and bar chart displays, the calls in danger of missing a time window.

manifest being transmitted direct to the driver. As you would expect of software from the Paragon stable, Fleet Controller contributes to the accuracy and immediacy of information for management use too, generating exception reports and data on driver, vehicle and service performance which can be analysed against Paragon's transport plan.

Cost effective control system

One of the first ways in which users can realise these benefits is through a cost effective solution provided in a joint development with RAM Mobile Data. The system links Fleet Controller with RAM's Mobitex Wireless Data network, a GPS receiver and a terminal in the vehicle. The RAM network offers continuous real-time connection to IT systems for mobile users. This system is currently being trialled by one of Paragon's clients. Ever-focused on flexibility, Paragon's team has developed Fleet Controller so that it should be straightforward to link with whatever in-cab system a specific client prefers. One system that is creating particular interest which is already being used with Paragon is Isotrak.

This development approach is also evident in the different ways the module can be used with Paragon itself. While it's expected that Fleet Controller will, typically, be installed with the full Paragon vehicle routing and scheduling software for dynamic planning, it can also be used with Paragon Fixed Route Manager as a day-to-day management tool, in operations where routes remain largely stable from day to day.

Top of the Hots

Paragon has been selected as one of the UK's Top 50 small to medium sized software companies by the DTI-supported Software Business Network (SBN), making it one of the country's "hottest" technology firms.

The list of Britain's software stars was drawn up by an Advisory Board of key global players in the IT industry, including senior representatives from Oracle, IBM and Sun Microsystems, with the support of the SBN. What they were looking for were companies with a proven product, a strong home market and the potential to fly the flag for Britain overseas. Paragon fitted the bill on all counts.

This 'Best of British' initiative reflects government recognition of the important contribution being made by technology SMEs to economic strength and competitive advantage. A contribution which the SBN itself was formed to support; its remit being to accelerate the growth of the UK hi-tech industry.

As one of technology's shooting stars Paragon was invited to the launch of the SBN's recent Software Partnering and Investment Forum, at which Small Firms Minister Michael Wills described the firms making presentations as, "Some of our most promising software businesses". Paragon's Managing Director Dr David Holmes presented a paper outlining the factors that have enabled Paragon to achieve its current market-leading position.

Paragon est arrivé

Paragon took a significant, strategic step towards its globalisation goals when it arrived in Paris in March to launch the system's French version at SITL (La Semaine Internationale du Transport et de la Logistique). Determined to capitalise on the success of recent implementations in France, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Poland and Germany, Paragon decided to have a significant presence at this, France's largest annual logistics and technology exhibition. Response at SITL proved it was a sound decision, with Paragon pour Windows generating a great deal of interest, both from potential clients and business partners.

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Summit scales new heights for Safeway in Canada

When Summit Logistics, a division of Tibbett & Britten Group North America, providers of dedicated logistics services for Safeway in British Columbia, was looking for a computerised vehicle routing and scheduling system to achieve a step change in service and efficiency for the Vancouver district distribution operation it selected Paragon over other North American systems. Directions discovers why...

Summit was embarking on an overhaul of its operation and the system underpinning this change had to provide strong support on a number of levels. Not only was the distribution operation moving from manual planning to same day scheduling and delivery, Summit also intended to introduce a radically improved service so that any store could order any product ranges on any day. The search was on for a system that could provide operational resource and scheduling solutions and also develop strategic plans for Summit and Safeway throughout the province.

The Vancouver operation, employing approximately 400 warehouse and 100 transport staff, delivers to 80 urban, island and rural stores – some up to 1,500 mountainous kilometres away from the depot. Adding to the demands of this configuration was the need to include the

separate frozen, chilled and ambient warehouses in the information loop to achieve the new service standards and secure overtime reductions in a heavily structured labour environment.

Summit's Planning and Development Director Tony Houghton knew of Paragon's software and support and was confident the system was right for the country and the sector. Even so, Paragon was assessed against local systems before a decision was made. Paragon came out clear winner, able to accommodate regional road networks with accurate modelling of road speeds and driving patterns and a multi-trip capability which could drive Summit's bid for improved service and cost reduction. Summit also clearly viewed Paragon's strong customer support as a key requirement in their decision making process.

Paragon's track record showed that the Paragon system was the right tool for the job, that the implementation would be smooth and short and that our business would see real financial and service benefits very quickly. Their support - even with time zone differences - has been excellent.

Tony Houghton, Director Planning & Development, Summit Logistics



Implementation took just six weeks for the urban schedule – including the creation of an interface with Summit's multi-trailer management system to facilitate efficient loading by the three warehouses. Implementation was also speeded by Paragon's easy use of data from the existing in-cab system, whose precise information was used to calibrate the system's parameters. Implementation of the up-country and island services followed immediately.

From the start, operational planning time was reduced to under two hours per day for the entire operation and many stores started receiving their orders just six hours after placing them. "Paragon isn't just proving to be the backbone of daily operations," concludes Tony Houghton, "it has also helped instill operation-wide discipline, with output dictating order assembly and loading sequences as well as providing a timetable for all our activities and deliveries."

Mike Sankey is responsible for the distribution of wines from Octavian's 32-acre underground cellars in Wiltshire for over 1200 customers, for consignees ranging from restaurants, hotels, pubs and clubs to individual fine wine investors. He uses Paragon for the live scheduling of 30 vehicles.

"Orders start coming into Octavian's order tracking system from 9am. Those required for delivery are selected and allocated a Paragon time-slot code according to when the order must be delivered. With such a diverse client base – we could be delivering anything from a single case of vintage wine being sold by an individual to pay for his daughter's wedding to a bulk order for a top London hotel – time constraints vary enormously. I have to admit that because of this complexity I wasn't convinced Paragon was up to the job when it was first implemented. I decided to spend a month trying to make it work, believing it would fall flat on its face. I ended up proving myself wrong – and I've never looked back!

Our orders are not sent to Paragon until 2pm, so until then I'm free to get on with managing the vehicles and drivers. I use Paragon as a modelling tool to plan our vehicle needs – it's helped us overcome a historical bias towards 17 and 7.5 tonne trucks and we're now reaping the cost benefits of operating a more efficient fleet. I also regularly analyse Paragon's reports to improve factors such as driving efficiency.

Paragon copes with complex city routing – we're doing it and we're doing it well.

Once it receives the order files, Paragon produces the next day's local delivery plans, and load sheets are sent to the warehouse for overnight assembly. Paragon's plans not only meet every constraint, they have also broadened our horizons by producing more varied routes. That's not to say we don't tweak the plans. We do, involving drivers so that their knowledge of local conditions or an early-bird cellarman can help us refine them. London deliveries are planned separately, which means we can offer a late order cut-off time for customers within the M25. We used to have a London depot and the feeling was that Paragon couldn't cope with complex city routing – but we're now doing it and doing it well. This is important for us – it means we can compete on a level playing field with companies in the capital. Even after six years, Paragon is still contributing to the market edge that was the initial impetus for its implementation."

Mike Sankey
Transport Manager, Octavian

Year 2000:

Compliance not Complacency

Paragon recognises the importance of Year 2000 compatibility issues for its clients, giving the subject the highest importance internally with the establishment of a Year 2000 team headed by Managing Director Dr David Holmes and Software Development Director Richard Street.

Over the last two years, Paragon has provided specific compliance information to hundreds of people in Year 2000 client teams tasked with system audits. Everyone who has contacted the company has been satisfied with the information provided, with only one client coming in to review the situation face to face. As Paragon's system doesn't process any date information, only using the date on reports and recording for information the date that certain files are created within those files, there is no reason why versions of Paragon should not continue to function before, on and after 1 January 2000.

The significance of the issue for clients has, nevertheless, led Paragon to carry out documented tests in accordance with British Standard PD2000-1:1998 – in which the system has operated without problem. And in a move indicative of Paragon's thorough approach, testing hasn't been confined to the standard, off-the-shelf software, but has also covered bespoke systems such as GM Opel's inbound logistics



planning system and Tesco's grocery and fuel delivery systems. As a result of all these tests only one change has had to be made – in a bespoke system where the dates of creation of two special files were compared. Although all Paragon's testing indicates that the system is compliant, there is no place for complacency and users should review three key areas: hardware, interfaces and Operating System.

It is now recognised that there are a lot of computers that aren't compliant, a situation that

can't generally be confirmed by checking model and serial numbers, but will depend on which chip they contain. The only way to confirm compliance is to test the hardware.

As many clients have Paragon linked to other systems, interface software must also be checked. In operational use, Paragon usually receives data from an order processing or warehouse system, with details being passed back after routing to drive warehouse picking or the production of driver manifests. Interface software may, for example, take account of dates in selecting the orders to be passed to Paragon or process dates when using the data passed back.

When it comes to Operating Systems, recent versions should be compliant, but very old ones should be replaced with those quoted as compliant. Paragon's testing has been carried out using Windows NT Version 4 (Service Pack 3), Windows 98, Windows 95 V4.00.950C and Windows 3.1.1 – on the basis that these, or more recent versions, are the operating systems clients should be using. Paragon has even checked out its software under DOS 6.22 – although this isn't recommended for use. Users of OS/2 should use OS/2 Warp 4.

If you have any queries or would like assistance in dealing with this important issue, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Check out

www.paragon-software.co.uk

...for information on available software options and services. See who else is using Paragon - and how it is helping them rise to their distribution challenges. Discover the benefits the system's additional modules could deliver for you.



Why not pay our website a visit?

Version 1.7: A new system for new users

Version 1.7 of Paragon for Windows was first shown at Softworld for the Supply Chain in March. It provides an ideal system for new clients today and a firm foundation for the next major release that will be going to existing users later this year.

With more intuitive interactive facilities, version 1.7 of Paragon for Windows should appeal to new users. Reports can be tailored to meet individual needs and compatibility with Fleet Controller should make it easy to link Paragon to any available in-cab system. It also has a role to play in the company's global growth plans by supporting local languages. The launch of the French version at SITL in March marked the first fruits of this.

The completion of 1.7 establishes the foundation for future Paragon systems. Data is held in completely new structures making it simple to increase any capacity limit. The new 32 bit platform and techniques used will greatly facilitate future development work, the creation of special versions and the provision of minor enhancements when clients want them.

Whilst version 1.7 will appeal to new users, for existing clients Paragon is developing further functional advancements before issuing a general release later in the year. This will be based on 1.7 and using its 32 bit platform it will provide users with new, useful and innovative facilities maintaining Paragon as a superior planning tool that will meet their needs into the future.

next step...call Paragon

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Paragon welcomes . . .

- NESTLÉ, one of the world's leading food companies, which is implementing Multi-Depot Paragon to improve efficiency and customer service through the live daily scheduling of its complex distribution operation delivering brands such as Nescafé, Rowntree and Buitoni to thousands of customers nationwide.
- Hays, the contract distribution specialist whose use of Paragon to plan fixed routes for the rapidly expanding chain of Select Shops at SHELL petrol stations will enable not only faster planning, but also easy re-planning as store numbers grow to 860 this year.
- Exel Logistics, which has purchased Paragon for DUNLOP'S Middleton depot, adding another name to the roll call of clients in the automotive components industry, which already includes Pirelli, Goodyear, Tenneco and Unipart.
- WAVIN INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS LTD, whose selection of Paragon follows successful implementation by its sister company Wavin Building Products Ltd and trials demonstrating savings of up to 10%. The system will be used to improve service levels and increase transport efficiency.
- ABBOTT JOINERY, which joins Paragon's existing building sector clients B&Q, Magnet, Moores Furniture, Silentnight Group, Do It All and Wavin with the goal of improving management and driver control of its large, multi-day route operation delivering windows and doors to building sites nationwide.
- LONDIS, another Multi-Depot user, whose choice of Paragon for the live daily planning of deliveries of food, drink and household essentials to over 1,850 Londis owner-managed convenience stores confirms the system's suitability for convenience retailers.
- ROSEBYS CURTAINS & LINENS, which has decided to enhance its planning capabilities by acquiring the high-specification Paragon system for the strategic planning of its expanding operation delivering household textiles and soft furnishings to its network of over 300 outlets across the UK.
- ASDA, DELACHER (Hungary), EXEL FORD (Spain), WH SMITH, CITYWORKS and AUSTRIAN RAILWAYS who have all recently selected Paragon.