

Tracking System Lets TTX Instantly View Repair Status of Rail Car Fleet

Client

TTX Company provides railcars and related freight car management services to the North American rail industry, their stock owner and primary customer. The TTX fleet consists of 210,000 railcars which are serviced by 3 maintenance divisions and 31 field maintenance operations spread out across the continental U.S.

Executive Summary

Shop Car Tracking, a visually rich system replacing the TTX division whiteboards, allows for both the divisions and corporate to monitor railcars through shop. Shop Car Tracking handles the tracking of shop-related car movements and facilitates the update of shop arrival information by the Car Movement Center and Transportation department. The system interfaces to legacy application for railcar and repair related information.

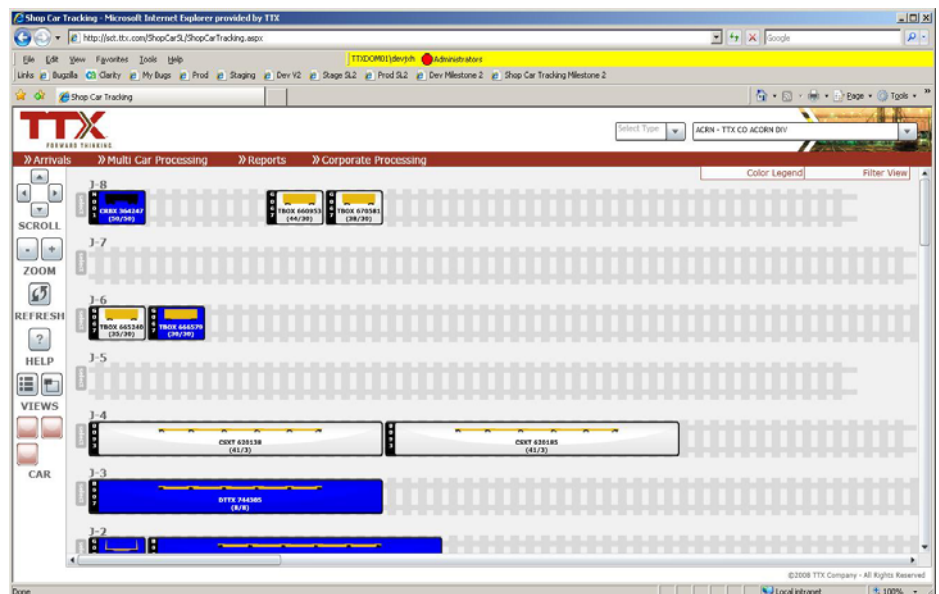
Business Challenge

The mainframe accounts for 20% of the existing system and is constituted of approximately 40 programs with 30,000 lines of code. PowerBuilder, responsible for the remaining 80% of the system, is fed daily/weekly data extracts and results in unsynchronized and out of date data. Affected business areas are: Equipment Department, Maintenance Planning & Control, Quality Assurance, Field Maintenance Operations and the Divisions.

Solution

The solution designed for Shop Car Tracking consisted of a visual drag and drop application that allowed TTX employees to interact with a Rich Internet application in the same way they might use their legacy whiteboards. The solution was built inside an internet browser upon Microsoft Silverlight with ASP.NET pages for text data (repair history, car details).

The cars are represented as rectangles with low res images which can be picked up and moved to any track. The Tracks are a realistic representation of the actual repair facility and are laid out to scale. The viewport can be scaled and scrolled to view a portion or the entire yard as desired. Cars can also be filtered to do searches for individual cars or groups of cars. Car information and status is shown as car background color and car image while more detailed information can be retrieved by bringing up a submenu associated with each car. Car information is retrieved from multiple data sources both internal and external. Another TTX group provides car details and arrival data. Car information is supplied by and provided to the industry standard database Umler as well as other external data sources such as the Railinc corporation. Reports are delivered with Microsoft SQL Reporting Services which allows for detailed rollup of data over time.





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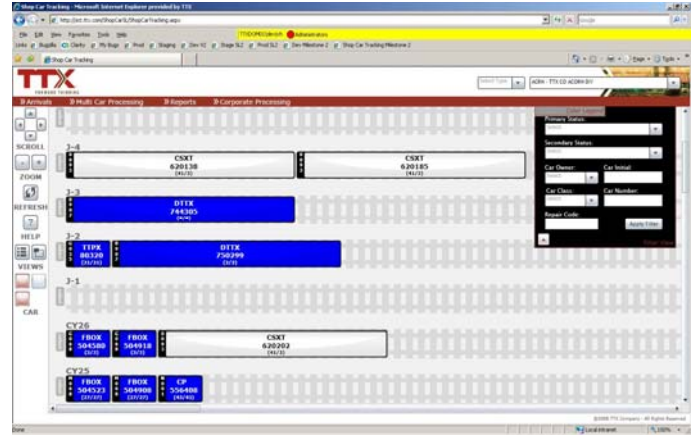
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Results

TTX shop workers no longer need to search through abstract lists of data to gauge where their cars are located. A user can also glance at a screen and get a feel based on the prevailing color of the screen to get an idea of the status of cars in the shop. Data is now TTX Corporate users now have to option of



getting either a rollup of data over time or can look at exactly what is happening at a shop at that moment. The solution also serves as a data input platform for 3rd party contractors to enter status data in allowing TTX visibility to repair work being done to their assets off TTX property. TTX also has a platform that can be extended to include tasks like planning and history. The benefits of a visual system allow a user to read and understand information more quickly resulting in better productivity and fewer discrepancies to what is reported in their system and what exists in reality.

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