

## MANAGING DRIVER COMMUNICATION

**Epsom Coaches has been using Omnibus software for many years, for both its bus and coach operations. Now the company is pioneering the use of Omnibus's latest innovation, myDAS Touch, after its drivers became the first to download the driver communication App.**

After reading about myDAS Touch in a previous issue of OmniNEWS, Ben Mitchell, Operations Manager, realised that the new App was just what they were looking for to manage their team of more than 270 drivers more efficiently.

Ben explains: "With so many drivers it soon becomes challenging to manage all their requests for information, so to give

them access to their own data via their smartphones seemed an ideal solution."

Drivers have been using the App since the end of November and the feedback has been excellent. "The drivers love it" says Ben, "they have much more control over their information, can submit requests for holidays and overtime and so much more."

Epsom is planning to hold a driver workshop to explore other ways that drivers can use the myDAS Touch App, including for duty swaps. Ben concludes: "It's a great piece of software by Omnibus with so much potential, and Omnibus have come up with the perfect solution to managing teams of drivers. I couldn't rate them highly enough."

Epsom Coaches was one of the first users of OmniDAS, later adding OmniTIMES, OmniBASE, OmniROTA and CrewPLAN.



*Driver Lauren Scott was the first to download the myDAS Touch App ▼*

### First to download the myDAS Touch App

**Lauren was the very first driver to download the myDAS Touch App for her Android smartphone. She was keen to get started as she realised that it would save her time at work and she wouldn't have to keep using her personal time to check up on her work schedule.**

Lauren explains: "It's fantastic because now I can check duties, rest days and holidays from wherever I am without having to ring anyone at the office. Now I don't have to print off pieces of paper with my duties on, so it's also better for the environment. I can check the rota and see what my colleagues are doing so now I know who to approach if I need to swap duties. Then all I have to do is request the swap there and then via the App."

myDAS Touch also lets Lauren know if there is overtime available and she can now plan ahead, knowing her days off more than two weeks in advance. She says "It gives me more time to swap rest days and duties, plus it benefits our allocation because there is more time to plan and give us the work that we want."

She continues: "It was very easy to download and set up and it's extremely easy to use. The layout makes it easy to navigate, even for drivers who aren't so used to using Apps."

"I wouldn't go back to not using the App. It saves everyone's time and makes it easier for everyone. It's surprising how beneficial something like this can be."

# CrewPLAN – simply does what it says on the tin!

The screenshot displays the 'Compare Labour Agreements' window in CrewPLAN. The table compares various labour conditions across different scenarios. The bus image in the background is a red Oxford bus with the slogan 'the bus company that's all about Oxford' and 'always going that little bit extra'.

	<input type="checkbox"/> Earlie	<input type="checkbox"/> Late	<input type="checkbox"/> Middle	<input type="checkbox"/> Splits	<input type="checkbox"/> O/T	<input type="checkbox"/> Days						
Driver SPLITS	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	10.00	10.00	4.00	4.00	7.00	7.00	
Driver	8.06	9.00	8.06	9.00	8.06	9.00	14.00	14.00	5.30	5.00	8.06	9.00
Number of Meal Breaks	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
Number of Long Breaks	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Number of Join-Ups	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	0	1	1	2
Join Ups	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Join Ups Overtime	30	15	30	15	30	15	30	15	30	15	30	15
Number of Tea Break	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Number of Join-Up	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	20	15	15
Meal Break	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	0	30	30
Number of Meal Break	90	75	90	75	90	75	90	75	90	0	90	75
Duty - Long Break	00.00	00.00	00.00	00.00	00.00	00.00	00.00	00.00	00.00	00.00	00.00	00.00
Duty - Long Break												05.00
Length - B												00.30
Length - B												05.15
Length - B												00.30
Length - B												05.15
First												04.45
Other												04.45
Time												05.15
Un												03.60
Un												00.00
Un												06.00
3 B												07.00
Time												07.30
Bus												10.00
Bus												09.00
F B												07.00
Bus												07.15

**With drivers' wages being the largest cost element in bus operations (accounting for 45% or more), effective control of this area of any business is essential. Whilst control of on-the-day operations is vital, and this can be achieved using Driver Allocation Systems such as OmniDAS, it is just as important that the schedules you are operating are as cost effective as possible.**

"CrewPLAN doesn't feature in OmniNEWS nearly as much as it should," says Michael Meilton from Omnibus. "It doesn't create the headlines because it just quietly works away in the background for our clients, creating duty schedules that not only meet labour rules but also contain features that make them operable. And it does all of that in minutes."

"There is a lot of power within CrewPLAN," continues Michael, "but it does benefit from a knowledgeable user to get the optimum results. Many companies use it not only for day to day schedules but also to cost and evaluate tenders. It is an essential planning tool."

Obtaining the best solutions to a problem can at times involve several runs with the user experimenting with different criteria in order to produce alternative duty schedules. With CrewPLAN, these changes can be done instantly, and with each run taking only minutes in most cases, it is easy to try a number of options in a very short space of time. This flexibility often leads to a choice of acceptable answers with different features, enabling operators to strike a balance between, for example, fewer three part duties with marginally more cost or a cheaper but tight and therefore not so operable solution.

CrewPLAN allows users to refine a variety of options and provides answers quickly, enabling the manager to select the optimum solution based on experience.

While CrewPLAN remains an unsung product because it simply does the job it is designed to do, Omnibus has been working on some software developments. One has been the raising of the software limits to enable very large scheduling jobs to be processed quickly. There is also an exciting development programme for the product that is current being worked on, which will give the scheduler the ability to consider even more factors when producing the solutions.

Michael concludes "It all goes to producing a cost effective but also operable solution quickly, which is what every manager wants. Watch this space – we will have more to tell soon."

# The best of both worlds

**Central Buses, the award-winning West Midlands operator, has purchased OmniTIMES and OmniBASE to improve and speed up the processing of its timetables and schedules data.**

When making the decision to move on from manual schedules to using software, Central Buses found that Omnibus offered the best of both worlds in that systems are electronic but still require an element of personal input and expertise.

Jack Grove, General Manager for Central Buses, says that the company took the decision while its fleet was still relatively small at 32 vehicles. Grove explains: "We had been using a manual system and were on the cusp of requiring a software solution, but still wanted to maintain a level of human input. We found that the Omnibus software provided us with the perfect solution and the time saved in planning and scheduling has justified our investment in it."

Central Buses has been undergoing a period of Omnibus training and data input, with the system going live for the next schedule change implementation.

Grove concludes: "We wanted to retain ownership and control over the system, which our previous manual system of course had, but we wanted to take the monotony out of it. Now we can make changes instantly and try out different parameters. We will certainly see some cost efficiencies in the coming year."

*Jack Grove, General Manager for Central Buses (left) with Richard Yeo, Business Development Manager for Omnibus ▼*



## The young bus managers' network

The Young Bus Managers' Network was founded in 2008 to help nurture and encourage the next generation of managers to take the bus industry forward. With a broad cross-section of attendees from across the industry, including operators, local authorities and suppliers, the network meets twice a year.



Our own Business Development Manager Kieran Proctor attended the most recent event, held in Glasgow, and commented: "It was a very worthwhile couple of days. Not only were the sessions informative but the ability to just meet with so many other industry professionals informally is so valuable."

Co patron James Freeman added: "The Network is an excellent way to support and develop the talent that the industry has in a very personal and relevant way. It is so important that we inspire the managers of tomorrow to take on key roles and apply their unique skills to move our industry forward."

He continues: "We welcome all young people involved in or connected to the bus industry to join us in Liverpool for our next event on 29th & 30th March." Kieran will be booking his place!

Go to [www.youngbusmanagers.org.uk](http://www.youngbusmanagers.org.uk) for more details.

▲ The Network's next event is in Liverpool on 29th & 30th March

# NO LANGUAGE BARRIER

**Carmarthenshire County Council is the perfect example of how Omnibus works in partnership with customers, from adapting formats and reports to completely re-writing formats in a language other than English.**

Carmarthenshire CC has used Omnibus software for several years, initially using OmniTIMES and OmniSTOP for local bus stop displays, then adding OmniMAP a few years later to meet Welsh Government Regional Transport Services Grant requirements.

Alwyn Evans, Passenger Transport Manager for Carmarthenshire County Council, told OmniNEWS: "Our first priority was to make the output bi-lingual. A lot of work was done to design a Carmarthenshire style OmniSTOP display, with Welsh the first language and English second, in accordance with County Council policy."

All Carmarthenshire bus stop displays follow a common format that is different to most other standard formats, so OmniSTOP was adapted by Omnibus to reflect this. OmniTIMES feeds the bus stop data, ensuring that it is always up to date and automatically keeps on top of the many changes that are made. Web pages and printed timetables are also fed by OmniTIMES using OmniEXPORT and again everything is in Welsh.

Following changes to the Regional Transport Services Grant made by the Welsh Government, it is now the responsibility of local authorities to pay Bus Services Support Grant to local bus service operators and therefore they need to have accurate mileages in order to verify the claims. Carmarthenshire CC now uses OmniMAP for this purpose, and Omnibus developed the software so that mileages, or kilometres, are calculated by county. The figures are highly accurate because the routes are measured by NaPTAN stops and OmniMAP recognises the county boundaries.

Alwyn is full of praise for Omnibus: "They are brilliant to work with. There is naturally some wariness involved in changing to a new system, but they made it so easy. Over the years we have found that they immediately address any issues and always find a solution because they know our business, and their software, so well."

▼ Omnibus produced bi-lingual formats for Carmarthenshire County Council



▼ "Omnibus are brilliant to work with – they make everything so easy"



## CONTACT

Omnibus  
Hollinwood Business Centre  
Albert Street, Hollinwood  
Oldham, OL8 3QL  
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)161 683 3100  
[www.omnibus.uk.com](http://www.omnibus.uk.com)

# omnibus



PASSENGER TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

