

## Working in the Cloud

### OmnIDAS Cloud

As part of our major development programme, OmnIDAS, the depot allocation system from Omnibus, has been re-engineered for the future. We are excited to reveal that OmnIDAS Cloud will soon be available to demonstrate to both new and existing customers.

### Investment

Many years of development time has delivered OmnIDAS Cloud, representing a significant investment.

Our Development, Business Development and Support teams worked closely together, scrutinising every aspect of the current system. Consultation with customers meant that we were able to incorporate feature requests and improvements, culminating in a detailed analysis of the current OmnIDAS product.

The result is a brand new system, based on cutting-edge technologies and featuring significant enhancements. The user interface has been completely redeveloped and refreshed, ensuring that it is both intuitive and flexible for cloud-based deployment.

### Continuous Improvement

During the development process we took on board comments from customers about what they would like to see from the software as well as comments that are passed through our team supporting the current product. As part of our culture of continuous improvement, regular engagement with our customers means that feedback will lead to future improvements as the product develops. In addition to this system refresh, our development team is also making further improvements to our popular driver app 'myDAS Touch' incorporating additional functionality and usability enhancements.

## LOOKING FORWARD TO ALBUM



**Omnibus is looking forward to another successful and enjoyable ALBUM event; hosted this year by Cardiff Bus, from 7th to 9th May. We're proud to support ALBUM this year as an Associate ALBUM member for the first time.**

The ALBUM team of seven, headed by MD Peter Crichton, will focus on the innovative software developments that have been made in the last twelve months. An important development is the adoption of cloud-based technologies, with the potential for rapid and flexible software deployment.

Cloud technology brings particular benefits to ALBUM members, giving them the flexibility of accessing Omnibus Cloud applications from anywhere. Peter explains: *"The advantage of our new Cloud based products is that schedulers and other software users are free to work flexibly from any location. They can work anywhere - depot, head office, from home or even while travelling."*

As well as showcasing our software on our stand at the conference, Omnibus is taking part in the evening itinerary. Our table gifts last year were very popular and we're pleased to take part in the Gala Dinner again this year by supplying gift bags for each guest.

Peter is passionate with his support for ALBUM: *"Our industry has always worked together, sharing best practice and promoting bus travel for the benefit of everyone. We look forward to this conference each year as an excellent opportunity to meet people and discover new ways of working together using the very latest developments in technology."*

## VIP guest at the CILT Centenary

As a Corporate Member of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT), Omnibus was invited to send a delegate to the organisation's Centenary Celebration Corporate Member Day. The invitation only event included a special Corporate Membership presentation and lunch at the De Vere Staverton Estate last month.

Marc Knott was the lucky Omnibus representative, who, along with other members, was presented to HRH Princess Anne, The Princess Royal, who was a very special and surprise guest.

► Marc Knott meets HRH Princess Anne at the CILT Centenary Celebration.



The CILT hails its Corporate Members as 'the bedrock of our Institute' and the annual Corporate Member Day celebrates those organisations, welcoming members from the financial sector, leading universities and the biggest names in logistics and transport.

# Helping East Yorkshire Buses systems to evolve



**East Yorkshire Buses has featured several times in OmniNEWS over the years, having used Omnibus software since 2002. Its recent acquisition by Go North East, part of Go-Ahead Group, has seen new investment in systems, such as the roll out of OmniDAS across the remaining depots and the introduction of myDAS Touch.**

Karl Cropper, Schedules Officer at East Yorkshire Buses, says that the Omnibus software has made the transition to the new ticket machines much easier. He explains: *"The Omnibus export capabilities really helped us to migrate data across. We used OmniMAP to set up the new Ticketer machines, which enables us to enter our unique stage numbers and timing points. This made it much more straightforward to implement the fare structure and we were able to deploy the machines in an impressively short timeframe."*

When the new East Yorkshire Buses App was developed, Omnibus software was used to supply the data. Using TransXChange, timetables created in OmniTIMES were imported directly into the new App, combining with real time data from Local Authorities.

In the early days of using Omnibus software, East Yorkshire Buses saw significant cost savings. Now those efficiencies are the norm and an accepted part of the process, as George Barlow, Commercial Systems Administrator, explains: *"All the products work together and integrate with other systems to enable information to flow between them all. They are so tightly integrated that you simply get end to end efficiencies."*

East Yorkshire Buses was one of the first operators to adopt MyDAS Touch, which was first launched at the Hull and Scarborough depots. Now it is being introduced to other depots and George has found that it gives his team much greater flexibility and efficiencies in communicating with drivers about shifts, swaps and overtime and it can also be used to send out important messages.

East Yorkshire Buses is currently working with the Omnibus Development Team to test the latest version of CrewPLAN. George welcomes the opportunity to help develop future software with Omnibus: *"They are sending an expert here to work with us directly to ensure CrewPLAN works in the way we want it to. We are also talking to Omnibus about moving their software to the cloud. This will be a huge step forward for us, as it will mean we can move away from locally based programs and access them remotely. So our operations teams can simply take a laptop to each of our depots and work with them in situ and in person."*

He concludes: *"We really value the way Omnibus works with us in developing the software as our own business develops and grows. Everyone we connect with there is extremely professional, knowledgeable and able to respond quickly to any enquiry."*

► Newsreader Jane Hill with Ross Newman of Ensignbus and Peter Crichton.



## Omnibus at the UK Bus Awards

Omnibus was proud to sponsor the Top Independent Operator Award at the recent UK Bus Awards. Huge congratulations must go to Ensignbus for winning Gold, Prentice Coaches for Silver and Scarlet Band Bus and Coach for Bronze.

We would also like to give a special mention to Omnibus customer Uno Bus Northampton for being a finalist in that category.

Peter Crichton, who presented the Gold Award to Ross Newman of Ensignbus, explains why the event is an important one in the Omnibus calendar: *"Having been a part of the UK bus industry for more years than any of us care to mention, the UK Bus Awards is an opportunity to highlight and celebrate all the amazing work that operators are doing, especially in these challenging times. We are more than proud to be a part of this industry and to support this event."*

# OUR DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY

As we don't often talk about the development work going on 'behind the scenes' we are taking this opportunity to explain our development philosophy.

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do at Omnibus. Regular engagement ensures that we are able to collect valuable customer feedback on an ongoing basis. Continuous improvement and anticipating future needs is core to the development of all our products – and feedback from our customers frequently leads directly to the delivery of regular enhancements and innovations.

Almost half of Omnibus staff are software developers, but all staff, including business development, scheduling, product and support experts, are involved in the development process. Omnibus understands the passenger transport industry with experience that is second to none. We're proud that everyone within our development team has a deep understanding of the requirements of the industry and is keen for it to thrive (all new developers take part in our TransACT schedules training course).

## Design fundamentals

Three principles are fundamental to the development of Omnibus products:

- **Usability:** our design team consists of experts with significant industry experience
- **Flexibility:** we want to help users, by delivering flexible, intuitive solutions
- **Control:** the software assists and suggests, but does not demand

## Key development themes

In addition to the ongoing incremental development of our existing product range, the last few years has seen a significant increase in investment on longer term key projects. The first of these exciting projects are now entering the alpha and beta testing phase, and there are many more to follow.

Rather than list all the projects in this article, we will cover the main themes and principles. There are currently three key themes which underpin our development programme:

## Cloud-based technologies

This important innovation has remained a hot topic over the last few years and we are at an advanced stage within our product development in this area. Central to this was the launch of OmniTIMES Cloud at EuroBus Expo 2018 and all of our core products are currently under significant development to allow each to be deployed using cloud-based technology. We feel strongly about ensuring that what we deliver is flexible and our approach will ensure that customers remain in control and are free to decide which hosting method is most appropriate for their circumstances.

## Research-based Algorithms

Our algorithms are research based and proven in use. Recent improvements to our crew scheduling algorithms are currently in beta at several customer sites, with very positive feedback. We are also making advances in applying data analytics algorithms for applications such as real-time analysis.

Artificial intelligence techniques are deployed where automated decision-making can offer real benefits for customers - but we will always ensure that the user maintains control.

## Data driven

Fundamental to our product development is our new and extended data model, which maintains a flexible design ethos with improved integration between applications. Importantly, this will deliver enhanced reporting capabilities.

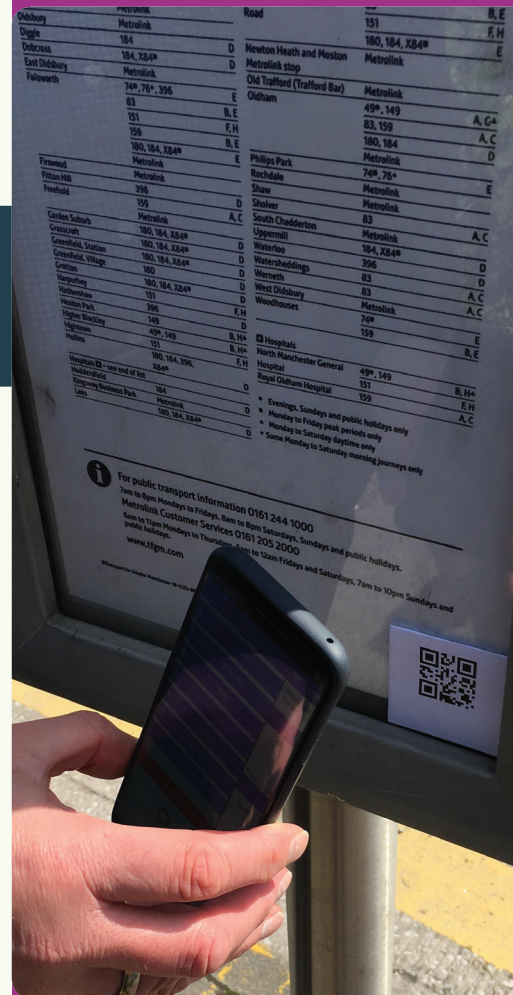
We support an extensive array of import and export options, including:

TransXChange, GTFS, VDV, propriety formats and NeTeX (in development as the agreed profile develops), all built on our industry recognised expertise. We actively engage with Open Data initiatives.

With an increasing demand from our customers for an ability to analyse their real-time data, we are developing tools which will help build more robust running times into timetables from various data feeds.

## Innovation

30 years of innovation means regular development to ensure our customers always benefit from the latest technological advances. Our reinvestment programme delivers this effectively and independently.



# Sign on remotely with our myDAS Touch driver app

As part of our ongoing development of products we are now able to offer the option of remote driver sign on as an enhancement to our driver allocation system OmniDAS. This uses additional functionality in our popular mobile app myDAS Touch to confirm the driver is both on time and at the correct location to start their duty. A range of options are available for infrastructure or vehicles to suit any operation such as QR code, RFID or NFC placement.



# Cardiff-ising the system

► Cardiff Bus was one of the first operators to use Omnibus software.



**With Cardiff hosting this year's Album Conference, OmniNEWS takes a look at how Omnibus software has helped the operator over the years.**

Cardiff Bus has been an Omnibus customer since the early 2000s and uses the full suite of Omnibus software, including OmniTIMES, OmniBASE, OmniROTA, CrewPLAN and OmniSTOP for bus stop displays at around 1700 bus stops. Gareth Stevens, Commercial Manager, spoke to OmniNEWS and told us that Omnibus is amongst the company's most established suppliers.

*"The scheduling software is so intuitive and logical. This allows for users to work with the software and find it really easy to use"* he says.

Omnibus has been working closely with Gareth and his team over the years to develop the software. Gareth says that the recent cloud-based developments could be particularly good for the small operators.

Omnibus has worked with Cardiff to make some specific amendments, or to 'Cardiff-ise it' as Gareth puts it. *"We'll have much more flexibility be able to create more bespoke and technically challenging schedules"* he states.

Working closely with Gareth's team, Omnibus has shown its industry leading credentials. Gareth says: *"They clearly take great enjoyment from working with our team and the support we receive really is exceptional. Their personalities and background in the industry are a great bonus from a scheduler's point of view."*

## TESTING, TESTING

**In an exciting new development for CrewPLAN, three customers are testing the very latest version, and benefitting from its powerful new features.**

CrewPLAN has an unrivalled pedigree with research-based algorithms that are robust and proven in use. Omnibus developers are finalising a range of enhancements to make the software even more dynamic, flexible and powerful.

New features include the ability for the user to be highly specific about the results that they want to achieve. Constraints can now be included to specify the types and average length of duties operators want to achieve, within set parameters, giving much more flexibility.

Enhanced functionality has been added to better tackle large and complex problems using a newly-developed iterative process.

There is also now an enhanced penalty feature to minimise but not totally eliminate undesirable features, such as changeovers during peak times.

CrewPLAN now uses a much more powerful methodology for dealing with complex problems to make scheduling more dynamic.

Graham Atkins, Network & Schedules Planner for Yellow Buses in Bournemouth, is working with Omnibus to test the new CrewPLAN. He says that it has already saved him and his company many hours: *"The bottom line is that it all comes down to cost savings."*

Yellow Buses has a very strict set of union guidelines, which make creating duties highly complex and time consuming. Although CrewPLAN can create any number of highly efficient duties, the complexities of the additional parameters had previously meant that Graham had to spend many hours manually manipulating the results to get a set of duties that worked for them, and that would be approved by the union.



► For Yellow Buses CrewPLAN is a 'little bit of magic.'

*"CrewPLAN is a very powerful package, which allows me to crew up all the bus workings in whichever way I want. I can add in various different parameters and run multiple scenarios to present both to the unions and to the finance department"* explains Graham. *"Now at least 90% of the duties get approved immediately, which is a huge improvement."*

The savings have been almost instant, and not just on Graham's time creating the duties. He explains: *"I can cherry pick from each of the scenarios to create the best possible, workable outcome with much less manual input. Often I can save at least 10 hours in the duties per day, more often than not saving a duty or two. Across a year that really adds up. It's a little bit of magic!"*

**omnibus**   
PASSENGER TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

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