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Side-by-side processing, or how AgiliTrans can work with your current TMS

When you have a transportation management system (“TMS”) installed, running, and providing satisfactory results, the idea of a major system change to address a new line of business is particularly unappealing. Installing a new TMS for any reason can be expensive and stressful on employees, business partners, and customers.

But what do you do if you’ve identified new business opportunities, like intermodal or LTL, which your existing system can’t handle? There are several choices:

- (1) Ignore them (and your competitors adopt them).
- (2) Buy another application for the new line of business and run it in a stand-alone basis.
- (3) Undertake a major development effort with your in-house staff, the same staff that already has a long to-do list and no understanding of the new business.
- (4) Outsource a major development effort to an offshore vendor so your IT staff can work odd hours talking to the offshore team when they’re not dealing with the \$125K/year project manager you’ve hired to keep all the plates spinning.

What’s senior management to do? It’s a real dilemma: you want to expand your IT capabilities to capture new business; use your existing infrastructure (web site, document imaging, computer hardware, support staff); minimize collateral damage to employees, business partners, and customers; and do it all with a reasonable budget.

There is a solution: use the “side-by-side” option offered by Ayers Rock Software’s **AgiliTrans** applications. “Side-by-side” is a term that refers to the approach of running **AgiliTrans** on your existing **System i** hardware, next to your existing TMS, and then linking the applications together with programming “umbilical cords”. These umbilical cords (for the technically adept: database triggers, SQL, and logical files) allow **AgiliTrans** to use a considerable part of your existing IT infrastructure, including your main web site and your back-office applications.

In side-by-side mode, when you enter a shipment in **AgiliTrans**, the shipment will show up immediately in the incumbent (current) TMS’s order database (and immediately on your web site: you *do* have real-time tracking, don’t you?). As that shipment changes status, those status changes will be reflected immediately in the base TMS. It looks like the shipment is being handled in your “normal” application; it’s visible using your standard tracing/customer service programs.

The order number sequence comes from the base TMS, as will the customer number sequence: when a customer is added to **AgiliTrans**, it will be added to the base TMS’s database as well. Existing TMS customers can be pushed to the **AgiliTrans** database as well. Billing, invoicing, cash application, and revenue accounting functions for **AgiliTrans** shipments can be processed by the base TMS¹. We can configure the umbilical cords to handle your environment!

So, what does the LTL component of **AgiliTrans** do in the side-by-side world? It handles B/L entry, rating, manifesting, and LTL operations; loaded trailers can be released to a truckload system for dispatch or can be dispatched using **AgiliTrans**’s powerful native dispatch system. The 3PL component of **AgiliTrans** handles quotations, order entry, shipment control (dispatch), and special applications (rail billing, etc.). These applications are where the business processes specific to the new line of business exist.

If you have a requirement for a tightly-linked system, our programming umbilical cord will be attached in front of the base TMS’s order entry system. If you need integration for visibility and general ledger only, you’ll get far more business functionality by using the full **AgiliTrans** (including revenue accounting), and we can still provide shipment visibility in the base TMS and a G/L interface for corporate financial reporting.

For additional information about **AgiliTrans** or the side-by-side technique, please contact Reeve Fritchman at Ayers Rock Software, LLC (reeve.fritchman@agilitrans.com).

¹ The **AgiliTrans** revenue accounting system is substantially more flexible than any other currently available and a considerable amount of functionality is lost when a 3rd party revenue accounting system is used (because a non-transportation revenue accounting system won’t have the same industry-specific functionality, including support for high transactions volumes, as **AgiliTrans**).