

►► **RECENT NEWS**

Communications and Networking, November 2005, Vol. 8, No. 11

Oil well logging company processes invoices over 1X wireless network

Tucker Wireline gets paid more quickly now that it sends electronic invoices through Telus Mobility

11/9/2005 3:01:00 PM

by Greg Meckbach

As multinational petroleum firms invest billions in wells and bitumen extraction plants in northern Alberta's oil sands, the dominant Western Canada telecom carrier is targeting oil companies' suppliers with its wireless services.

imagine if everyone
was as dedicated to your
business as you are.



Before an oil company ramps up production, it normally finds a firm to dig holes and take measurements in the soil and rock - a process known in the industry as logging. Tucker Wireline Inc., a Calgary-based logging contractor, used to send paper invoices to its customers from the field - a process that could take up to three weeks, said Dave Jellett, the company's vice-president of technical services. Now Tucker Wireline workers fill out work tickets and invoices on notebook computers equipped with 1X cards and sent them back to the head office over Telus Mobility's network.

integration with erp

Tucker works for some of the biggest names in the oil patch, and its top two customers are Husky Energy Inc. and EnCana Corp.

"With EnCana, it's really helping us because it helps us get them an electronic invoice very quickly," Jellett said. "The faster they receive it, the faster they pay us."

He added 90 per cent of the company's work is done at four different sites: Kindersley, Sask.; and in Alberta at Leduc, Grande Prairie and Medicine Hat.

Tucker Wireline is using business process software manufactured by Calgary-based Spira Data Corp. Spira's product takes invoice, payroll and other business data and sends it to a company's financial or enterprise resource planning application.

The most important component of the Tucker Wireline implementation was the "pricing engine," said Spira president Jon Watts.

"There's very very specific knowledge in the oil and gas industry on pricing, on the data collection of the service tickets," Watts said. "We go back in, we process it, and then we will pump that into ERP financial systems of any size, whether it's Microsoft, ACCPAC, SAP, for back-end integration."

Although Tucker Wireline uses Spira primarily for invoicing, it also reports data on use of equipment, revenue per service and revenue per day, Jellett said.

"It creates a whole database of records you can capture at the well," he said.

Although he considered giving the workers Palm handheld devices, he decided notebooks were more suitable because they have additional features.

"With the notebook out there, it gives the client the ability to sign off on that invoice at the end of the job."

Most files transferred are less than 60 KB in size, so the 1X network is fast enough, Jellett said.

1x has worked well

"It's where this data might be integrated with other applications that are more bandwidth intensive that EVDO may become more of an attractive play," he said. "1X has worked very well for us because of the way that it works in getting the data in as quickly as possible. We have hit a couple of situations where we've been outside the 1X coverage, in remote areas, and the system's set up so that next time you turn it back on, it sends."

Although the main benefit of the electronic invoicing system has been prompt payments, Jellett said it has helped reduce the number of invoice errors, which were common with paper-based systems.

"Either they put the wrong price down or they forgot to put a price in, or they miss an item because it's too hard to look it up.

He added in the past, invoices had to be handled five to seven times at the company's head office.

Although Tucker Wireline paid a licencing fee for the service, Telus is setting up a hosted service for other firms wanting to use Spira's business process software.

"This is targeted more at the service and supply industry than the producing side of the oil and gas industry," said Jeff Lowe, vice-president for oil and gas marketing at Telus Business Solutions. Lowe said more than 11,000 firms in Canada fall into this category, and although most are very small, at least 4,000 would be in the market for the hosted service.
