Customer Profile

Company

C&J Bus Lines
Family-owned and operated intercity bus company serving the New England region since 1968

Industry

Transportation

Data Sources

Third-party SaaS-based transportation management platform

Charting a Path to **Recovery** with InsightOut

C&J Bus Lines accelerated business recovery with enhanced data visibility to adapt to changing consumer behavior, uncover growth opportunities, and enable data-driven decision-making

Travel in the time of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly altered our lives, ushering in a profound shift in how we work, learn, travel, and go about our daily lives – the ramifications of which will likely be felt in the years to come.

While no industry has remained unscathed, travel has been among the hardest hit, witnessing a dramatic decline in passengers across the airline and public transportation sectors. Indeed, according to a poll from Morning Consult, 68 percent of respondents will be traveling less this holiday season than usual, and 72 percent don't plan to travel at all for or around the winter holidays.

While traveling itself can be a stressful experience, the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the unknowns, requiring transportation companies to implement new strategies to keep their customers happy and safe. Adapting to new market trends and expectations and behaviors among passengers will be pivotal not only to these companies' ability to recover, but to their future sustainability.

Data is one of the most powerful tools that businesses have at their disposal to respond to the changes necessitated by COVID-19. Aggregating the right data and having a streamlined data architecture in place will be indispensable, facilitating the ability for businesses to remain adaptable to a rapidly changing environment. Indeed, now more than ever, leveraging data for actionable insights and decision-making has become critical for businesses to survive in a post-pandemic landscape.

For over 50 years, **C&J Bus Lines**, a family-operated business serving the New England seacoast community, has provided bus passengers with safe, reliable, and flexible transportation, with routes across New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, and New York City. In March of 2020, they suspended all transportation services as a public health and safety precaution. After five months, they resumed service with new safety measures and transportation schedules in place. As they prepared for business recovery, C&J turned to InsightOut for data-driven insights to better understand the shifts in consumer behavior and new revenue opportunities. By leveraging InsightOut's automated insights, C&J has become better equipped to pivot and adapt to the changing landscape resulting from COVID-19.

Sitting on a (Bus) Load of Data

Prior to the pandemic, C&J Bus Lines recognized that they were sitting on a wealth of data about their passengers – from frequency of purchase and method of purchase (online vs. terminal) to cancellations, refunds, and re-bookings – that resided in their ticketing and route management system.

While they were aware that the system contained all of this information, they had no easy way to extract it for valuable, actionable insights. In other words, they lacked the proper data architecture to fully take advantage of it.

"There was a lot of descriptive information that we didn't know about our travelers because there wasn't a good enough pathway for our team to get access to the data," explains Brooks Jalbert, Customer Care Manager at C&J.

While they occasionally used a manual process of poring through spreadsheets and the ticketing process system to retrieve data, it was incredibly time consuming and cumbersome, and didn't generate the deep, impactful insights that would drive decision-making.

"The question became: How can we take the data that we know we're sitting on and convert it into something usable?" Jalbert remarks, "How can we extract insights that we know are there and create something that the whole team can engage with?"

Ultimately, C&J realized the best way to make the most of their data was to develop a custom data warehouse and automated analytics processes.

> "The question became: How can we take the data that we know we're sitting on and convert it into something usable? How can we extract insights that we know are there and create something that the whole team can engage with?"
>
> **- Brooks Jalbert**
> Customer Care Manager

Full Speed Ahead: Going Farther With Data

C&J approached Treehouse Technology Group (TTG) to implement a customized instance of InsightOut, enabling them to better utilize their repository of passenger information.

"One of the core goals of our engagement was to facilitate simpler and more frequent data-driven decision-making," explains Jalbert, "We knew we needed a custom integration because the data already existed. It just needed to be modeled in such a way that it was more efficient."

One of the key challenges C&J faced was organizational data that was siloed in a system managed by a third-party SaaS (software as a service) provider. With their extensive services experience, the TTG team worked closely with both groups as an intermediary in order to translate the technical requirements of the software system to align with the business rules and metrics defined by C&J.

The InsightOut solution provided a way to unlock the data through a custom integration, aggregating data from the preexisting business applications and creating a reliable, streamlined ETL (extract, transform, load) process to pipe the data into a managed warehouse. With a custom data connector and robust management framework in place, InsightOut's data discovery engine began generating automated business insights while maintaining high-levels of data integrity.

"[The TTG] team went above and beyond to provide guidance that was sometimes outside of the scope of what we had originally set out to do, which was to build a data warehouse and set up a platform," Jalbert shares.

C&J's team members can now easily access the unified data in their InsightOut dashboard with dynamic visualizations of key performance metrics, highlighting their revenue streams and helping them to better understand the full customer journey.

The dashboard provides a top-line overview of the year-to-date data, with statistics on total revenue, online transactions, new riders, number of rides, and "advanced booking days" average – the time between when a customer purchases a ticket and takes the trip. Users can also see and analyze total rides and revenue per month, year-over-year revenue growth for all routes, new versus returning customer revenue, transaction rates across multiple sales channels, and more.

"You don't have to be a data person to engage with [the InsightOut platform]", says Jalbert. "It is completely user friendly. You don't have to type in a line of code to do anything. It's fully customizable."

> "You don't have to be a data person to engage with [InsightOut]. It is completely user-friendly. You don't have to type in a line of code to do anything. It's fully customizable."
>
> **- Brooks Jalbert**
> Customer Care Manager

Ultimately, InsightOut blends C&J's previously fragmented data sources into a unified view and allows the team to more deeply engage with the ridership and ticketing data. InsightOut's dashboard offers various filters to customize the data, providing insight into the most popular transportation routes and method of ticket purchase. C&J can monitor and analyze the types of customers they are serving and drill into specific date ranges to identify customer trends and patterns. Such insights enable C&J to make more confident business decisions, backed by quantifiable metrics.

"We are now able to do ad-hoc queries and directly access the data warehouse created by InsightOut, which gives us great flexibility," remarks Jalbert. "The system is reliable and the results are reliable, which has really given us momentum."

On the Road to Recovery

While C&J had long operated on a blend of data-backed and instinct-driven assumptions about customer behavior – such as how customers bought their tickets, when they bought them, etc. – the InsightOut platform has provided them with verifiable, in-depth understanding. This has become particularly valuable amidst the pandemic, as they work to assess what new customer behaviors they need to meet and how they are performing from a revenue recovery standpoint.

With standardized metrics now readily available, C&J saw how significantly the pandemic-driven market impacted certain KPIs (key performance indicators). In fact, they've witnessed online sales rise from 50 percent to 75 percent, a consumer-driven decision fueled by the pandemic. With access to these insights, C&J is able to quickly and accurately respond to changing consumer behavior and market demands, giving them a competitive edge in the post-COVID landscape.

Furthermore, their new customer rate has jumped by 15 percent – a growth that remains consistent on a weekly basis – an indication that they're making recovery and new market gains.

"Ultimately, InsightOut has facilitated greater discussion and incorporation of performance indicators in our routine strategy conversations," says Jalbert. "There is also more sharing of easy-to-understand performance data at an organization-wide scale."

Key Results

Automated data pipeline for greater visibility into business drivers and trends, enabling **better decision-making** and driving **process efficiencies** at every level

Clear channel-based performance tracking for more agile pivots and resource allocation in response to market demands, boosting their **competitive advantage**

Complete picture of the end-to-end customer journey and changes in consumer behavior for an **enhanced customer experience**

Poised for a Data-Driven Future

While C&J originally set out to build a data warehouse, they were able to get much more with InsightOut's fully scalable enterprise data analytics framework. With this solid foundation in place, C&J is able to explore further opportunities to infuse data into their workflows and decision-making.

With further systems and application integrations, C&J could incorporate more detailed operational data such as their buses' on-time percentage, breakdowns, fuel costs, etc., which in turn could help them analyze how to cut costs. Or, with further marketing integrations, C&J could better assess how customers are finding them, which keywords generate leads and conversions, and the effectiveness of coupon codes or targeted campaigns. These insights could be pivotal for optimal resource allocation or for tapping into newer markets, reaching more customers.

"Getting out of the jungle was the starting point for us," Jalbert explains. "We first had to be able to access and use our data. But there are definitely opportunities for more integrations and cross-functional insights down the road."

"InsightOut has facilitated greater discussion and incorporation of performance indicators in our routine strategy conversations. There is more sharing of easy-to-understand performance data at an organization-wide scale."

- Brooks Jalbert
Customer Care Manager

Unlock the power of your data

Drive business strategy and growth through in-depth data analysis and actionable insights with **InsightOut**

Schedule a custom demo here