

# MOBA SHOWS THE WEIGH TO GO

For companies in the waste sector, two things are almost guaranteed; the cost of waste disposal will continue to rise and the pressure on margins will grow stronger. Whilst the former will be driven by market conditions and, to a certain degree governmental intervention, waste contractors can still have plenty of influence over their own profitability.

This is the view of Ian Lewis, Managing Director of waste technology specialists MOBA, who says that through investment in technology, refuse collections can be made more transparent which will enable waste companies to more accurately identify and manage loss-making contracts.

MOBA has over twenty-five years' experience in delivering robust technology to the global waste industry, including on-board weighing and bin identification, in-cab technology, route optimisation, billing and even system integration. This allows waste management companies to optimise their collections and charge on a more flexible basis, helping them to reduce costs, boost revenue and deliver a better customer experience.

Managing bin weight is one major area where waste contractors can maximise their operational efficiencies. Prior to 1996, tipping was charged by the volume of the bin, so it did not really matter how heavy it was. The picture is very different today and means that unmanaged customers could be the difference between profit or loss. "Charging by weight is now seen by most forward-thinking waste management companies as the most efficient method of billing its clients as it helps them identify contracts that are systematically exceeding their contracted bin weight," said Ian Lewis.

"It not only forces clients to be more mindful of what they throw away but also provides waste management companies with opportunities to offer a range of add-on services such as extra collections and additional recycling bins as well as analysis and reporting," commented Lewis.

## On-board bin weighing technology with Clearaway

To achieve this, waste vehicles must be fitted with on-board bin weighing technology, linked to the collection company's back-office software, and MOBA is rapidly becoming the go-to technology provider in this field. One firm that has recently equipped its entire waste collection fleet with MOBA's Dynamic Weighing system is Midlands-based Clearaway.

The firm was only established four years ago following an acquisition, when Andrew Gibson,

Managing Director, recognised a gap in the market for a reliable, honest and competitive local service. Clearaway focuses purely on commercial waste, and has gained a solid reputation which has allowed it to expand quickly, to now cover Worcestershire, the Black Country and the West Midlands, including Birmingham.

Recognising the need to improve efficiencies further, the company identified that a Pay-as-you-go billing mechanism would help it quickly identify unprofitable contracts, particularly in the hospitality sector. Having reviewed all the available technology, it quickly became apparent that MOBA's Dynamic Weighing, coupled with its MAWIS 2.0 route optimisation software, would offer both the best robustness and reliability. After an initial trial, the company was convinced by the performance and now nine of its refuse fleet are fitted with MOBA technology. The results

are startling.

"From almost immediately, we were able to identify and deal with cases where bins were over-loaded," said Clearaway MD Andrew Gibson. "Unbeknown to us, 15% of all collections were above the contracted weight which, consequently, was impacting our bottom line. "By renegotiating contracts, providing additional recycling bins and helping the customer analyse their waste, we have realised savings of more than £100,000, which has supported the initial cost of the investment in the MOBA technology," added Andrew.

Another key benefit is that the technology brings an important health and safety aspect. By being able to identify heavy bins, the company's operatives now have the weight data that can help explain to a customer why moving a 500kg bin, for example, is not safe.





For those customers unwilling to change their ways, they have either had to find a company that still continues to flat-rate charge, or resort to using the local councils' service. This simply moves the problem down the line, meaning the tax-payer has to pick up the cost of heavy bins. Sadly, it seems that local authorities have been slow to grasp this issue meaning that adoption of bin weighing technology has been very sporadic. If councils have been slow to adopt a variable charging mechanism for trade customers, what then is the likelihood of them implementing pay-by-weight (PAYB) to their residents? PAYB has been cynically viewed as another 'stealth tax' with the fear that it would lead to increased fly tipping, as was the experience in Ireland. However, with the pressure on budgets this is something councils may be forced to consider in the future. "As the cost of waste disposal increases and

recycling rates continue to stagnate, Councils need to take far better control of what is disposed of," argued Ian Lewis. "With a number of councils now charging for a green waste service, perhaps it is time that they also extend this to cover general waste, which, in turn, should also boost recycling rates."

However slowly this happens, the days of flat-rate charging must surely be phased out. Businesses and the public are slowly realising that waste is not only expensive but also detrimental to the planet and, by introducing control measures and an associated billing mechanism, will educate waste producers to be more mindful of what they dispose of.

Pay-by-Weight is though, according to MOBA, only one part of the technological revolution that will benefit the waste industry. Electric-powered and driverless vehicles are already

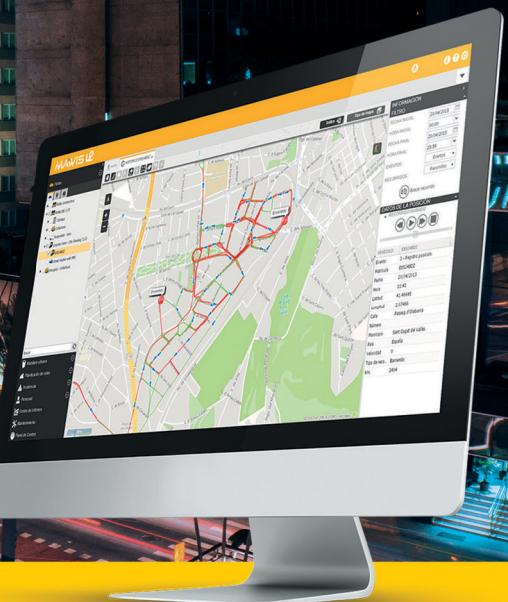
being trialled, and the signs are encouraging. Smart City technologies are also emerging that will significantly optimise waste collections. So, instead of pre-defined schedules, with half-full bins being emptied, vehicles will be automatically routed to collect only full bins. Although this technology is still in its early phase, there is a growing awareness amongst city leaders of the potential benefits of multi-application approaches to the deployment of smart city infrastructure and it should be the role of the waste industry to be ready to capitalise on these opportunities.

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