

## **eCourier - A new face on the block**

What do you do when the event tickets you ordered should've turned up by courier but got delayed and consequently you and your friends missed the show? You decide to start up your own courier company. That's what Tom Allason and his colleagues have done.

However, rather than take on the usual model of a courier company and try and do what so many are already doing, the guys behind eCourier spent over a year analysing the industry, seeing what the successful and less successful companies were doing, and working out how to apply the very latest technology to the market.

Recognising that the control room absorbs a great deal of money in salaries for controllers and assistants, eCourier began with the concept that the fewer controllers, the better. Challenging a number of Universities and Colleges across the world to devise a solution, they commissioned an intelligent software system that they claim will be able to allocate jobs more efficiently than a human controller but without the salary overhead and scale limitations.

Using the latest GPS technology, the idea is that the computer knows where each and every driver is, down to the nearest six feet, and is able to match drivers to jobs and estimate delivery times based on up-to-the-minute information. eCourier also maintain that once they have started to build up a picture of their daily workload, the system will be able to predict where the next job will come from with a high degree of accuracy. With a far smaller control team (one of the managers claims he could run the control room from his laptop in his car at a motorway service station) eCourier are aiming to run a much tighter, less staff intensive operation and are also trying to encourage as many of their clients to book online thus reducing the reliance on telephonist staff as well.

The big question is whether the system will work. There are a great many traditionally-run courier companies out there doing very well, thank you very much, but times do change. Big contracts are won or lost over the price of a single docket and anything a company can do to bring down its overheads puts it in a more advantageous position when tendering. Also, one would hope that these reduced overheads would translate into higher rates for riders and drivers. eCourier certainly assert that this is their intention.

eCourier look to be challenging convention and only time will tell whether they have the right system. TRD will be watching with great interest.