miles & money

Ownersite.com proves you can track and calculate your fleet maintenance for maximum savings. The recession is driving more operators to the accessible, online services.

By Martin Romjue

STEVEN EPPINGER has noticed a growing client segment for his services, which he never pursued nor knew about before: Limousine operators. • In the last two years, the founder, president and CEO of Ownersite Technologies of Roswell, Ga., has seen a small slice of limousine operators show up on the Owersite.com radar screen of 18,000 to 20,000 vehicles in the online database. The operators were among fleet clients such as mortuaries, Geek Squad-type services, landscaping firms, and HVAC companies that developed interest in the efficiencies of online fleet maintenance. • The clientele splits about 70% consumers, with an average of three vehicles per client, and 30% fleet-centered businesses, with an average of 20-25 vehicles each. With only a handful of chauffeured transportation operators so far, Eppinger sees ample opportunity to help operators in this recession and beyond.

WHAT DOES OWNERSITE.COM DO FOR CLIENTS?

1. Maintain a comprehensive at-a-glance service history for personal and company fleet vehicles, such as details about fuel usage, oil changes, tire rotations, routine maintenance, payments and parts purchase
2. Reminds and alerts clients via email, wireless, or on-screen reminders by odometer reading or time period for more than 70 service procedures or warranty, insurance, registration, and driver's license expirations.
3. Records other vehicle information, such as purchase details, insurance data, registration dates, personal or business trip logs, factory and extended warranty details, trouble logs, etc.
4. Provides dozens of easily generated reports, such as maintenance history logs, cost-per-mile figures, fuel economy stats, recalls and technical service bulletin summaries, consumer complaints, defect investigation summaries, crash test and rollover ratings, etc.
5. Manages and tracks vendor-related expenses for tax and budgeting purposes.
6. Connects to easy remote access and data entry capabilities with its mobile Internet interface for micro web browsers, the iPhone, Blackberry, Treo, smartphones, and laptops. The mobile interface accesses the most frequently used features such as fuel record entry and usage reporting, service reminder review, maintenance history access, and business or personal trip log entry and review.
7. Offers data entry capability through Twitter.com.

HOW MUCH DOES ACCESS/ SERVICE COST?

On the low end, $60 per year for a 10-vehicle fleet.

On the high end, $500 per year for a 100-vehicle fleet.

Steven Eppinger estimates $200 per year savings on maintenance per vehicle as a result of more efficient tracking and use of detailed information.

■ **Ownersite.com offers operators detailed logs and spreadsheets of maintenance data, cost calculations, and payment schedules.**

With the loyal audience of truck owners, I developed Ownersite.com."

Ownersite.com does not compete with larger fleet management companies, Eppinger says, opting to target smaller companies whose owners/executives operate more as all-in-one managers of smaller fleets.

COMPANY EVOLUTION

EPPINGER GREW OWNERSITE.COM out of an auto hobbyist website he started and previously owned called F150online.com. The site is geared toward owners of Ford F150 trucks. Internet Brands acquired it from Eppinger in 2007.

"Along the way I encountered people who loved vehicles and wanted to know anything and everything going on with fuel economy, maintenance histories, recalls, and other items," Eppinger says. "There was nothing on the Internet that did it comprehensively, except some handheld PDAs and desktop applications.

> "Ownersite.com takes a 'holistic' view of what's going on with vehicles, so information doesn't have to be entered manually." — STEVEN EPPINGER

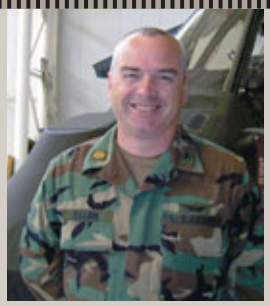
FUTURE GROWTH

THE SITE HAS evolved into its eighth or ninth iteration, Eppinger says, and the company is eyeballing integration arrangements with other online or software companies that provide applications or platforms for limo-related accounting, scheduling and reservations, and GPS-fleet tracking services.

"The economy is definitely driving growth on the fleet side," Eppinger says. "To this point, we haven't spent money marketing and promoting our fleet product, growing instead from word of mouth." LCT

FASTFACTS

NAME: Ownersite Technologies, LLC
WEBSITE: www.Ownersite.com
FOUNDED: January 2001
LOCATION: Roswell, Ga. (suburban Atlanta)
OWNER: Steven Eppinger, president and CEO
KEY SERVICES: Online maintenance tracking and reporting
VEHICLE DATABASE: 18,000 to 20,000
CLIENTS: 30% fleet; 70% consumer
Top client locations: CA, NY, TX, FL, MI, GA
ANNUAL REVENUES: Less than $1 million (privately held)
ANNUAL GROWTH RATE: 18-20% average
EMPLOYEES: 5 full-time; part-time contractors
INFORMATION: (404) 402-7117; seppinger@ownersite.com



HOW IS IT WORKING?

DAVE ALLEN, owner of three transportation companies in Spokane, Wash. — Spokane Racing Limos, ExecuVan, and Stars and Stripes Shuttle — signed on with Ownersite.com in February. Since then, he estimates the online maintenance service has saved him 10% on the monthly insurance premiums for his eight-vehicle fleet.

Allen operates four 14-passenger Ford shuttle vans; two 2008 Dodge Grand Caravan taxis, and two racing-style stretch limousines.

The service saves time, Allen says. "I've gotten much more out of this than expected," he says. "I get e-mails and text reminders of when maintenance is due and vehicle payments are due. That's been a big help in keeping on top of everything."

Allen says the site enables clients to look at detailed computations of individual vehicle cost averages for fuel, mileage, and service. "There's a lot of good information at a glance as long as you put information in," he says. "It saves me more on time than anything. Ownersite allows us to have a proactive maintenance program instead of a reactive maintenance program."