Chad Henning, Co-President of Cash-Wa Distributing, says his grandfather had a favorite section of the company’s 280,000+ square foot warehouse in Kearney, Nebraska: the “Candy Room.” This likely stems from the company’s humble beginnings in 1934 as Cash-Wa Candy Co.; Henning’s grandfather, Harvey Henning, worked as a peddler for the company, delivering candy to customers in his hometown by bicycle. He worked his way up the company ranks, and in 1957 purchased the company.

Now known as Cash-Wa Distributing, the family-run company is one of the largest independent broadline foodservice distributors in the nation with over 600 employees. In total, Cash-Wa distributes more than 20,000 items across 11 states, to customers ranging from health care facilities to luxury restaurants and from schools to convenience stores.
“In this highly competitive industry, companies have to continuously improve to meet customer needs and stay ahead in the game,” Henning said. To be at the forefront of the food distribution industry, he had a vision of being able to track every product from the moment Cash-Wa received it to when it was delivered by one of the company’s 150 drivers. “Having the ability to track and monitor temperatures, from the time of receiving on the warehouse dock to delivering to the customer’s door, is one example of what our company is doing to help meet our customers’ needs. With food safety being more important than it ever has been, there is no doubt that temperature tracking is a value-added service that is highly sought after by our customer base.”

Jim Hoss, VP of Operations at Cash-Wa

A Complete Platform, with an Open API

Cash-Wa believes in investing in technology to achieve its goals, explained Jim Hoss, VP of Operations at Cash-Wa, who has been in food service distribution for 17 years. In their search for a fleet management solution, Henning and Hoss evaluated eight vendor proposals and ultimately chose Samsara’s hardware-software solution because it offered the most modern and complete platform.

“Samsara provides the whole package—no other company could bring all the pieces we wanted to track together like this,” Hoss said. “If it weren’t for Samsara, I’d probably have at least four vendors to cover all the things it’s doing for us. From GPS and temperature monitoring to driver safety, fuel savings, and Hours of Service, it just works. And the data is very accurate.”
Cash-Wa deployed Samsara vehicle gateways (VGs), asset gateways (AGs), and 440 wireless environment monitors (EMs) across the company’s fleet of 175 tractors and 220 trailers. With this hardware in place, Hoss can see the GPS location of every tractor and trailer in his fleet—and perhaps even more importantly, the temperature graphs for both frozen and refrigerated compartments of each of his trailers—from anywhere, in real time, including live and historical logs.

Meanwhile, by relying on Samsara’s open API, Cash-Wa is able to seamlessly integrate all of this data into its customized in-house software. This includes integrating temperature/GPS data into its proof of delivery software solution as well as pulling driver logs into its payroll software. “The open API gives us the freedom to utilize the sensor data for our own purposes,” Hoss said.

Winning More Business with Real-Time Temperature Tracking

The sensor data Hoss is most passionate about is the temperature data. Samsara’s EM wireless temperature sensors not only ensure that Cash-Wa is in compliance with FSMA regulations, they also prevent human error within Cash-Wa’s busy 24-hour operation, improve operational efficiency by reducing paperwork and manual probes, and provide proof of product quality. As a result, Hoss estimates that Cash-Wa has decreased its credits paid out to customers in response to improper-temperature claims by 30%.

“I’m tracking the produce every time it moves, and I have alarms in place to indicate temperature changes,” Hoss said. “So I know that we’re delivering wholesome quality products in every load—I know, for example, that my lettuce never goes below temperature. Samsara gives us that confidence in the integrity of our supply chain.”

Cash-Wa’s ability to prove product quality and supply chain integrity has been an ‘eyebrow-raising’ selling point with their customers, said Henning. “Samsara makes us better,” he said. “The more information we can share with our customers, the more comfortable the transaction. Being able to show end-to-end tracking from our dock is helping us win more business.”
gateways include a built-in WiFi hotspot. With this additional connectivity, Cash-Wa discontinued the service previously used to support the scanners. “We got rid of 144 cellular accounts and saved a lot of money every year, thanks to Samsara,” he said.

Cash-Wa also relies on the Samsara Driver App on their handhelds for Messaging between drivers and dispatch. Not having to call drivers individually increases efficiency, whether the communication is a company update, a query for feedback on a new process, or a directive about a misloaded case of product. And, more communication means better morale.

“Drivers universally talk about how Corporate doesn’t communicate enough with them,” Hoss said. “So it’s awesome to have an easy way to reach out to everyone when something big is happening, such as to remind them about our truck driving championship. Some drivers even reply to say thanks. Better communication improves driver retention.”

One Intuitive Interface to Maximize Operational Efficiency

“Food distribution is an industry where success ultimately depends on your standard of efficiency,” Hoss explained. And the data from Samsara helps the Cash-Wa team make decisions about how to run the business more efficiently—in particular, Hoss said, because of Samsara’s intuitive user interface.
“I appreciate the clean format, rather than information overload,” he said. “Samsara is the first screen I pull up in the morning, often to see if we’re on time on our routes. It’s easy to see safety violations this week, or how much fuel I used today, or the average distance the team drives in a month.”

To help maximize productivity, Hoss utilizes Samsara’s dormancy report to keep tabs on his 220 trailers. If he sees that a trailer hasn’t moved in a few days, he starts asking questions. “I’m not making money unless those wheels are turning and making deliveries to customers,” he said. At the same time, he keeps an eye out for overutilized equipment that could then wear out too quickly.

Similarly, Cash-Wa utilizes Samsara’s maintenance reports and alerts to streamline the preventative maintenance process and address fault codes more efficiently. “Every truck out there is an opportunity for a breakdown,” Hoss said. “Keeping our trucks running at top quality means we can prevent delivery delays.”

Given that the Cash-Wa team travels over seven million miles every year, Hoss and Henning are very sensitive to fuel efficiency. Fortunately, the Samsara dashboard showcases fuel usage by individual driver, making it easy for Hoss to see which drivers require corrective action. “When gas goes up a penny, we feel it,” Hoss said. “We’re making improvements to save Cash-Wa money.”
Samsara & Cash-Wa: Partnering to Push the Industry Forward

As Hoss and Henning build Cash-Wa into a next-generation food distribution business, they appreciate partnering with a next-generation technology solution. “The Samsara product is groundbreaking, light years ahead versus traditional telematics solutions,” Henning said. “With Samsara you get the whole story on your transportation fleet, rather than just pieces here and there.”

Hoss envisions Cash-Wa and Samsara working together to advance track-and-trace technologies across the food distribution industry. “We picked Samsara because we believe it’s a true partnership,” he said. “I called Samsara recently with an idea to make the product better for everyone, and within a few months my idea was part of the solution. That’s the kind of partner I want for the long term.”

Find out how the Samsara platform can help your business. Email us at sales@samsara.com.