

# STORAGE

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# EMBRACING CHANGE: LOTT OIL INVESTS IN CIVACOMMAND SMART TANK SYSTEM

**W**hen a company has been in business for more than half a century, it's likely they have built a formula for success. Successful companies also need to continuously evaluate their environment as business conditions change and adjust their plans if necessary to continue thriving.

So it is with fuel and lubricant distributor Lott Oil Company, Inc., founded in the early 1960s by Luther Lott, Sr., in the central Louisiana town of Natchitoches. After starting with one truck and two employees, Luther's son, Luther Jr., affectionately known as "Buddy," succeeded his father as company president in 1979 with a growth mindset. Eventually, Lott Oil became one of Louisiana's largest distributors of fuels and lubricants for the industrial, commercial, retail and wholesale markets through the northern half of the state and into east Texas and southern Arkansas.

From that one truck, Lott Oil has grown to operate a fleet of 22 tractor-trailer delivery vehicles operating out of a network of eight distribution centers in the cities of Natchitoches, Alexandria, Leesville, Many, Monroe, Mansura, Bossier City and Winnfield.

Michael Lott, the fleet's transport supervisor and Buddy's son, serves as the third generation of Lotts

responsible for running the business. One of his key tasks is ensuring that all deliveries are completed properly, with no product cross-drops occurring during loading and unloading, and no retained product at the conclusion of the fuel-drop process.

"We had been using a manual system – manually dispatched, manually monitored – to track our deliveries, but we wanted to create another fail-safe to prevent cross-drops at gas stations," Lott said. "When a cross-drop does occur, it is a pain to get the fuel out of the tank and it's a pain if someone gets bad fuel in their car, then we have to pay to fix the vehicle. Overall, rectifying a cross-drop is just a very costly and frustrating process."

Fortunately, Lott attended a trade show earlier this year with one of his mechanics when he bumped into Scott Mehman, strategic products sales manager for Civacon, Kansas City, MO. The two spoke, allowing Lott to express the frustration Lott Oil experienced in trying to prevent fuel cross-drops. This gave Mehman the perfect opportunity to introduce him to Civacon's CivaCommand Smart Tank System. CivaCommand is the only solution on the market for petroleum trailers that uses expandable, advanced digital technology to control the loading and unloading process, helping fleets streamline their fuel

deliveries and reduce costly mistakes. It is a highly engineered, easy-to-use solution that consolidates access to the different control systems on the delivery trailer – including cross-drop prevention, fuel-retain notifications, overfill-prevention monitoring, pneumatic (air pressure) control, security, electronic product-grade indicators (PGIs), troubleshooting and usage history.

"Our mechanic was very interested in how it could prevent cross-drops, so we looked at it in detail and saw that it was something we could afford to try," Lott said. "We were also really interested in the system's ability to produce a retain notification so that before the driver leaves the fuel site he will know for sure if anything remains in that fuel compartment before he returns to the terminal and reloads." Lott Oil had just bought two new trailers, so they chose to outfit them with the CivaCommand system in late April. In the first few weeks of using CivaCommand, it has received rave reviews from the company's drivers. "The drivers were a little apprehensive at first, but after doing the training with Scott and his team, they got really comfortable with it," said Lott. "When you've been doing something for 10-plus years, no matter what it is, you might be skeptical at first, but so far there have been no complaints; they've taken to it really fast."

Lott Oil has eased into the use of CivaCommand with the two trailers delivering two loads, or a total of 32,000 gallons a day, but Lott foresees a day in the not-too-distant future when Lott Oil's entire fleet will be outfitted with the CivaCommand system. Now that sounds like a formula for a successful change.

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