

# Digirail Comes Out TOPS in GBRf Digital Transformation

*Optimising operations is the key to driving a major modal shift towards rail freight*

**A digital-led strategy to drive more effective operations in rail freight is critical – and rail freight companies must continuously strive to implement digital processes to achieve greater efficiency.**

The reasoning is clear. Digital innovation cuts CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and improves connectivity, operational efficiencies and service. Through digitalisation, the sector is positioning itself among the most environmentally friendly transport modes, creating more opportunities for a modal shift towards rail.

GB Railfreight (GBRf), a major player in UK rail freight since 1999, has consistently delivered digital strategies to its operations – resulting in a reliability rate of above 99% for the last 12 years and a rapidly growing client base.

The question they have always asked in order to achieve is: “how can we work harder, faster and cleaner for our clients?”

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Here was one possible answer: the rail freight sector relies on the Total Operations Processing System (TOPS) for its logistics, an effective but older computerised system with roots in the 1960s. With notable room for improvement, GBRf called on Digirail to look at automating and improving the system, integrating it with other platforms and the cloud. >>



## *A collaborative solution to improve freight rail*

Tom Clare led the project for Digirail. The company has delivered hundreds of adaptable intelligence-based solutions since the company began in 2019.

Alongside GBRf, they drew up a master plan – a blueprint for a system that accessed relevant data accurately and quickly before effectively breaking it down and sending it to the user.

“It needed to be designed for real-time, up-to-the-minute reporting so that the operations team can constantly track the performance and requirements of their large fleet of locomotives,” Tom said.

“It had to be a right-first-time solution – a system that would strengthen GBRf by contributing towards operational efficiency and getting more trains on the lines to deliver more freight.”

The resulting system is monitored by bots – autonomous entities made of code that work without human supervision. They scour the UK-wide database, reviewing the information and putting it in the hands of users, wherever they are based.

“Now, if you want to know where a locomotive is, how it is doing, and where it could be deployed tomorrow, it’s much easier,” Tom said. “And it happens in a way that flows and reacts to other operational systems – improving wider business efficiency.



“But, crucially, the data is structured. This allows people to access immediate information on the status of their locomotive fleet better than ever before and is incredibly secure.”

GBRf CEO John Smith said he was pleased with their collaboration: “It might be easy for some to rest on their laurels, but we knew there were better ways of working. Our customers work with us because they know that we will always adapt to optimise what we do.

“DigiRail has done a fantastic job, and the improvements in efficiency were almost immediate – paying back the entire cost of the project in one fell swoop. I was particularly impressed with DigiRail’s cost-effective model and the team’s speed of delivery – they are a very knowledgeable and clever transformational team. We are already looking at our next set of digital transformation projects with them.” ●

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