packet | GEOSPACE LABS

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2015
YEAR FOUNDED

NY & CA
LOCATION

2017
SERIES A FUNDING

When trucks and infrastructure are mentioned in the same sentence, the discussion is usually about the state of our nation's highways and bridges.

But for GeoSpace Labs, their infrastructure challenges were strictly technology-related—fueled by a sharp growth rate and high processing needs.

The Colorado-based company provides fleet safety tracking technology for the trucking industry, including electronic logging of hours of service. According to a 2015 federal law, the country's 3.5 million truck drivers all have to transition from paper logs to electronic logs of hours of service (HOS) by the end of this year.

"The federal regulations say you can't drive three days straight on coffee; you've got to take breaks, you have to sleep," says GeoSpace Labs President David Lady, who co-founded the company with CTO Mark Rupert. "I equate our product to how airplanes have black boxes on them so in case something happens, they can see what led to it. Basically that's what these semi truck owners are going to have to buy."

Geowiz PRO, the company's core product, provides electronic logging as well as a full fleet management system. It consists of a mobile app and hardware that stays inside the truck and "talks the binary language of trucks," says Lady.

All of the data—such as the driver's hours, the speed of the truck, routing, and arrival and departure times—needs to be visible to both the drivers and the fleet managers. With the federal deadline looming, "we're taking on hundreds and hundreds of people a week," says Lady. And that volume has strained their servers. "We just couldn't scale. We'd think we'd be good when we had 3,000 [users], and then when we hit 5,500, all of a sudden the servers are slowing down. Because we're processing in real time, as soon as the queue backs up, when you hit the top, it just spirals and you have this huge backlog and everything's down."
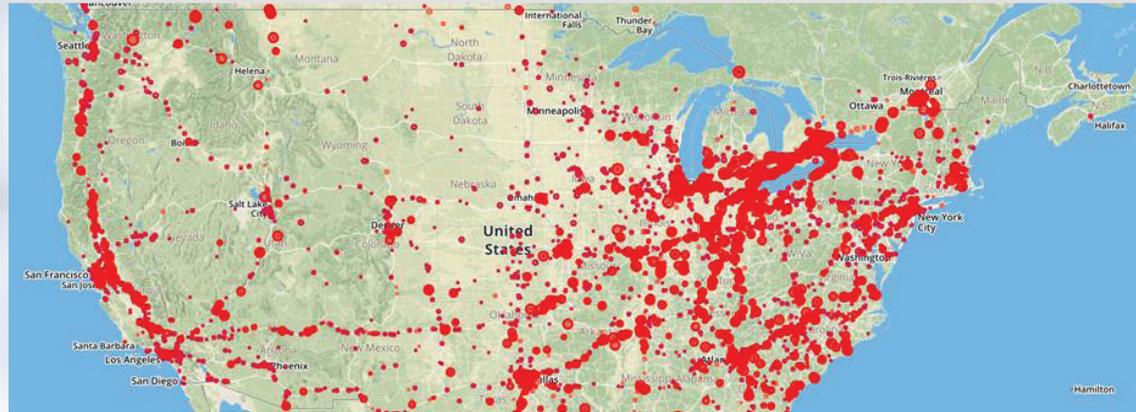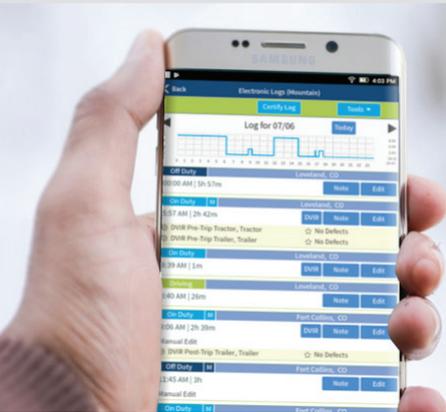
That, of course, was bad for business. "Our customers were very unhappy because the systems went down, it's slow," Lady says. "We also have to process in real time, so if we can't process quick enough to know when someone has arrived somewhere, then their arrival time isn't right. We didn't look as good as we thought we were because we were having infrastructure problems."

The company kept outgrowing its infrastructure, and had to change vendors 6 or 7 times. Then, one of their vendors suggested bare metal servers as a solution, and while shopping around, Lady found Packet. "I almost couldn't believe it," says Lady. "It was just the right price, mix of features, and functionality and cost. We experimented on it for about a week and went live that weekend."

Compared to other vendors' products, Packet's offerings seemed ideally suited for GeoSpace Labs' needs. "Everyone else seemed oriented towards uploading pictures and shopping carts and stuff, and that's just not what we're about," says Lady. "Our system is very processing-heavy, so we need the CPU cores. Packet's boxes provide very CPU-core-heavy configurations. And we don't need to pay for a lot of the other stuff. I don't need a lot of bandwidth. I don't need a lot of disc. But I need the CPU. The configuration we went on has 48 CPU cores, so it could distribute the load with all the processing on one box. I had eight VPS servers that I had to move over to that one because we had to keep pulling it apart, pulling it apart, pulling it apart so we could get all our processing done."

In just a matter of months, the added processing power the company got from moving to Packet has enabled it to introduce several new features, including translation into six different languages in real time.

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