



CASE STUDY:



Building Confidence in Every Mile:

How Nussbaum Uses Phillips Connect to Extend Trailer Life and Drive Fleet-Wide Efficiency

A seven-year partnership built on data, trust, and a shared commitment to doing things right.

At a glance:



~600

Power Units



1,700

Trailers



~540

Drivers



48

States



100%

Phillips Connect coverage

For nearly 80 years, Nussbaum Transportation has been guided by a simple but powerful philosophy passed down from its founder, Alden Nussbaum: "Treat your people well, and the rest will take care of itself." Today, that philosophy extends to how the Hudson, Illinois-based carrier thinks about its equipment and the technology that keeps it running.

Since partnering with Phillips Connect seven years ago, Nussbaum has transformed trailer management from a reactive guessing game into a proactive, data-driven discipline. The platform now touches every corner of the organization, from maintenance and operations to safety, sales, and the drivers themselves.

The Challenge



James Grier, Director
of Fleet Service

Tractors have always gotten the attention. Drivers live in them, report problems, and take real ownership of their condition. Trailers are a different story. On any given day, two, three, four, or five different drivers might touch a single trailer, leaving no single person responsible for its health. As Nussbaum grew from 200 to nearly 600 trucks over the years, tracking 1,700 trailers spread across 48 states manually became unsustainable.

"The sense of ownership isn't quite the same on the trailer side. So when we look at using Phillips Connect, we have better visibility of that equipment. We can ensure it's ready for that next driver and that handoff."

— James Grier, Director of Fleet Service

The company also faced a challenge common across the industry: new trailer purchases had slowed, making it more critical than ever to extend the useful life of existing assets. Nussbaum made a strategic decision to push its trailer replacement cycle from 10 years to 15. That kind of confidence requires eyes on the equipment.



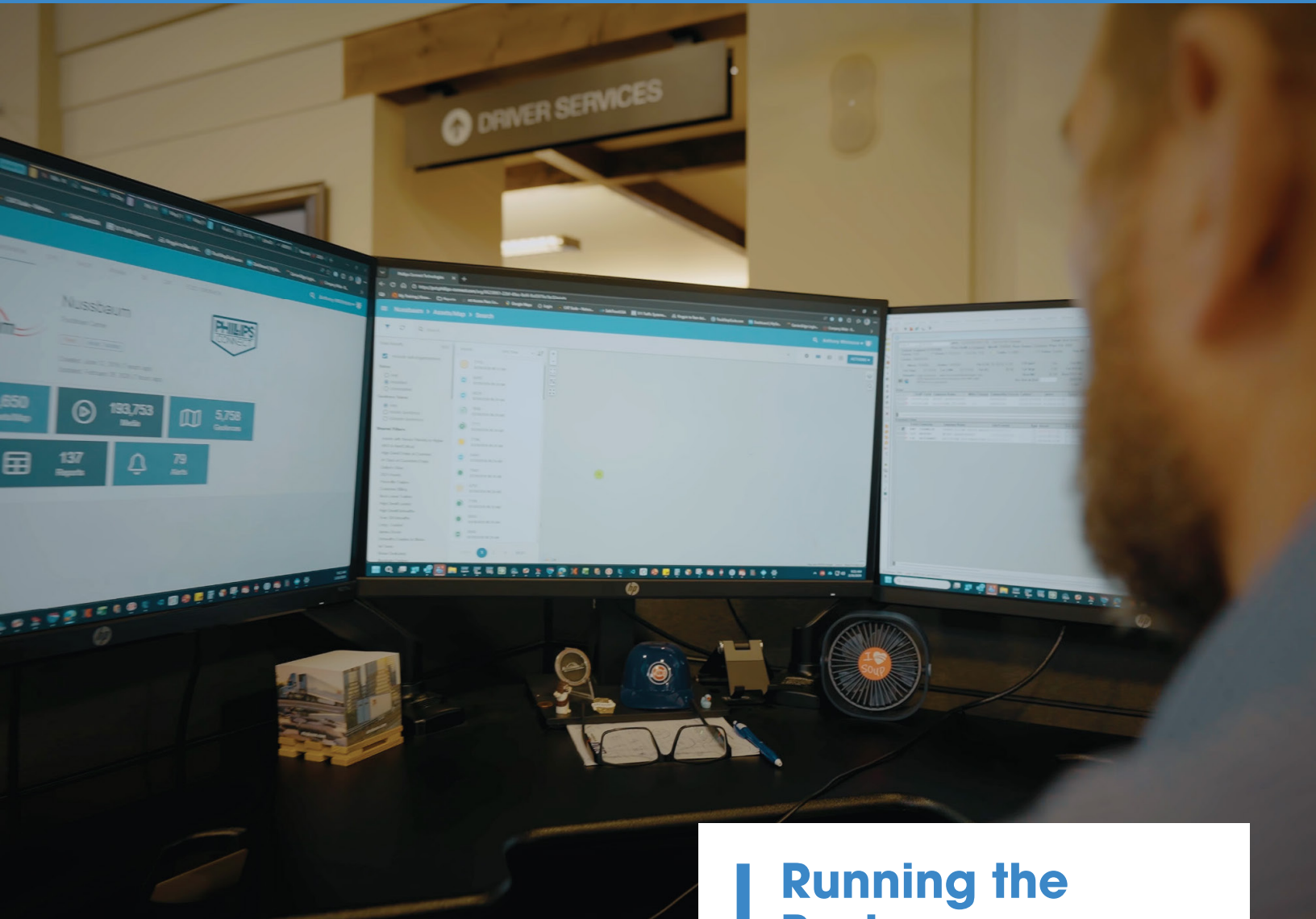
Why Phillips Connect

Tony Morthland, Nussbaum's Director of Equipment, has been in the trucking industry for 47 years. When Nussbaum decided it needed a smarter solution for its trailers, the team tested several competitors. A well-timed conversation about Phillips Industries' plans to enter GPS tracking led to a call that changed how the company managed its fleet.

"We were trying to solve problems. We were trying to make our people more efficient than just looking for trailers all the time," says Morthland. "They had all that. They had that on the roadmap. And they built it. The one thing that we really liked as far as a partnership overall was customer service. Everybody was nice. And the system you built from scratch from day one, you listened to the customer's needs. What we have today is something we can actually work with and make ourselves more efficient."

COO Doug Bradle, who has been with Nussbaum for 22 years and oversees operations and maintenance, echoes that perspective. "We're not afraid of trying something new. Phillips Connect would be an excellent example of that," he says. "Being willing to take a chance with a company that is young but yet feels like it has a lot of potential and is doing a lot of things right."





Running the Business on Phillips Connect

Part of what defines the Nussbaum and Phillips Connect relationship is Nussbaum's instinct to be among the first to put new solutions to work. When Phillips Connect develops something, Nussbaum wants to know about it. Not to collect technology, but because their people deal with real problems every day and they are always looking for a better answer. That posture has shaped how broadly Phillips Connect is now woven into the way Nussbaum operates, touching maintenance, operations, safety, sales, and the drivers themselves.

“Prior to Phillips Connect, we probably wouldn’t have as much trust in the equipment because we don’t have eyes on them. With Phillips Connect, we can have a little more trust knowing that we can reliably push the life of these trailers out to 15 years.”

— James Grier, Director of Fleet Service



Nussbaum

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Keeping Trailers on the Road

Visibility has always been the trailer's weak spot. Tractors generate a steady stream of driver input; trailers can drift in and out of view for weeks before anyone notices something's wrong. Phillips Connect gave Nussbaum the visibility the industry had been missing.

Every Nussbaum trailer runs TPMS. A slow leak that used to become a blowout on the highway, a service call, and a driver sitting on the shoulder now gets caught and handled at the facility. Light-out detection means a burned-out marker light gets fixed before a driver gets pulled into a scale house for a DOT violation. ABS fault codes flag a brake issue before the trailer ever leaves the yard. And wheel-end temperature monitoring gives the shop visibility into bearing and brake heat that builds up long before it becomes a wheeloff situation on the road.

Critical alerts flow directly to a shared inbox the roadside team monitors around the clock. When something urgent comes in, they are dispatching a vendor before the driver even knows there was a problem.

"There are constant unsung heroes," says Grier. "Roadside is working to get these assets fixed so that driver arrives and they're oblivious to what happened prior to them getting there. It positively impacts their day because they're getting out with a fully operational trailer."

The data has also allowed Nussbaum to move away from fixed-interval preventive maintenance schedules towards something more precise.

Rather than running every trailer through the same PM on the same timeline, the team can now see what actually needs attention and when. "With the data streams coming in, we can see trends of what's happening on our equipment, and we can really fine tune our PMs," says Grier. The result is less unnecessary shop time and fewer things that slip through the cracks.

"It's allowed us to treat maintenance the same on trailers as we do on tractors," says Grier. "Being able to get access to that data visibly in the back office has just taken strides in the most recent years since moving with Phillips."

The results show up in the numbers. Since rolling out Phillips Connect, Nussbaum has seen a significant drop in roadside events and roadside costs, with both continuing to trend down. Their CSA score has improved as well, to the point where Nussbaum now leads its benchmark group. "I think we can take a large part of our success in bringing that number down to having this visibility on our equipment," says Grier.

That same confidence is what has allowed Nussbaum to extend its trailer replacement cycle. The company ran a 10-year trade cycle for years. They are now at 13 and actively working toward 14, with 15 in sight. With full visibility into the health of every trailer in the fleet, they can trust the equipment in a way that simply was not possible before.



Keeping Freight Moving

"Freight is beginning to pick up. We're getting busier. We need every trailer we've got," says Bradle. "So we're really focusing on how we can limit trailer dwell, how we can use Phillips Connect to identify those trailers that have high dwell time, where they're at, what's their status, and how we can get them in service."

Operations can see all 1,700 trailers at a glance: what is loaded, what is empty, what is road-ready, and where each one sits. Custom dashboards in the portal show customer drop lots and trailer pools, so dispatchers can see what is available without picking up the phone.

CargoVision has added another dimension to how operations handles service issues. When a driver reports a possible load shift, operations can look inside the trailer remotely before deciding whether to roll a truck. If the freight looks stable, the driver keeps moving. If it does not, they know before anyone wastes time driving out there.

Protecting the Company When Something Goes Wrong

When an incident happens, Phillips Connect gives Nussbaum's safety team something concrete to work with. The sensor record leading up to an event allows for a much more accurate determination of whether it was preventable. "We can go back and look at that sensor data to make a call if this was preventable, and we can be much more accurate in that," says Grier.

Cargo claims are where CargoVision has made some of the most tangible difference. The camera documents the condition of a load at pickup and at delivery. "We can show that the piece of equipment entered a facility without damage, and then show that that was damaged after it was loaded," Grier explains. "It's allowed us to be more confident going into that conversation."

Door sensors extend that chain of visibility further. Every time trailer doors open or close, CargoVision captures it. That creates a timestamped record of every access, which is invaluable when a shipper disputes responsibility for damaged freight.

Those same tools are becoming the

foundation of Nussbaum's approach to cargo security. Geofencing tracks when assets enter and leave customer locations. Cargo sensors flag when a trailer goes from loaded to empty. When a door opens somewhere it should not, an alert goes to the roadside team and someone reaches out to the driver immediately. "We don't expect that the truck and trailer are going to be under watch 24/7," says Grier. "Drivers have a life. This allows us to get a little more confidence and have a little more security as we add these additional features."

Phillips Connect TrailerID adds another layer. By tying a specific truck to a specific trailer at every connection point, the system makes it much harder for cargo theft schemes, including fictitious pickups where someone impersonates a legitimate carrier, to go undetected. And when customers have their own visibility into where their freight is and what is connected to it, that transparency is a deterrent in itself. "The days where knowing where your trailer is and where it shouldn't be isn't enough," says Grier. "You've got to have better visibility both on the trailer as well as the different systems."



Giving Customers Visibility into Their Own Freight

One of the less obvious ways Nussbaum uses Phillips Connect is through its sales team. Account managers can pull up a dashboard showing each customer's trailer pool: what is empty, what is loaded, and what is DOT-healthy. Customers can set their own min/max alerts so they always know what equipment is available to them without having to call.

"We've been able to create dashboards to put that information in front of them, allow them to set alerts to know what trailers are available, which ones are empty, which ones are loaded, as well as which ones are healthy," says Grier.

Putting Better Information in Front of Drivers

Improving the driver experience is a priority Grier and Bradle both come back to. Working with Phillips Connect, Nussbaum brought trailer location, load status, and DOT health information directly into its driver app. When a driver pulls into a yard, they can see which trailers are there, which are empty, and which are ready to go without walking the lot.

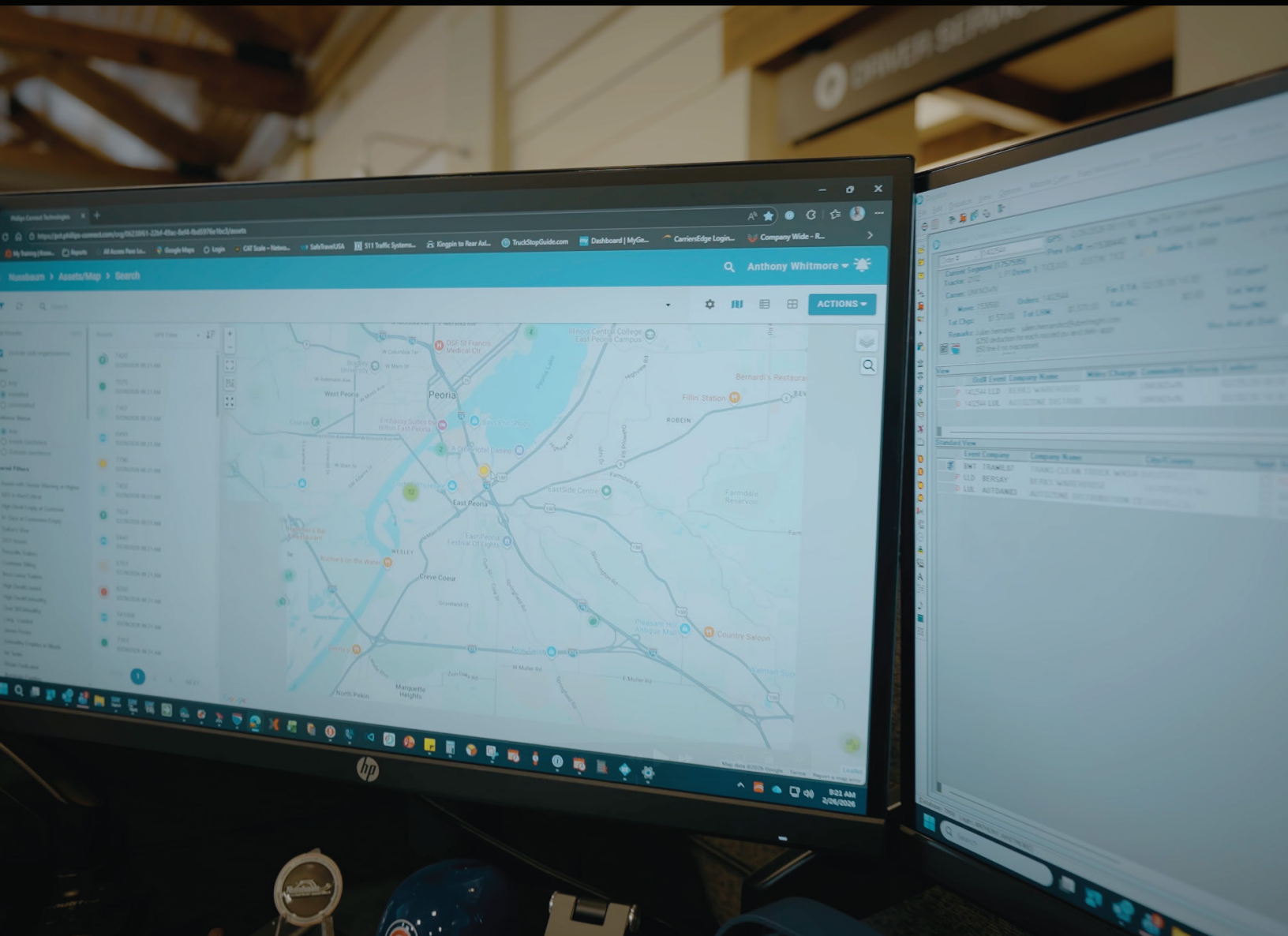
"We ultimately want to provide them a good amount of

information, at least actionable information," says Grier. The goal is for drivers to see the same picture the back office sees, so no one is working blind.

TrailerID takes that a step further. When a driver hooks up to a trailer, the connection logs automatically and flows straight into Geotab for hours-of-service compliance. No manual entry, no typos, no disputes over which driver had which trailer. With 600 drivers, that adds up quickly.

Grier is equally intentional about how new tools get introduced. "The technology is only going to work when the culture supports it," he says. Nussbaum communicates changes through a monthly driver podcast produced inhouse, explaining not just what is being added but why. "When they understand the why behind the new technology, the buy-in is just going to happen naturally. It's going to empower them, not replace them."





A Common Language Across the Organization

“Phillips Connect has allowed us to be more aligned,” says Grier. “Maintenance, operations, safety. We work collectively, and what this allows us to do is put a picture with our emails. If we’ve got an issue, we’ll take that screenshot and point operations or safety to exactly what we’re seeing in the portal so we can all work together to understand what’s going on and how urgent it is.”



A Partnership Built on Trust and Responsiveness

Nussbaum's relationship with Phillips Connect now spans seven years, one that Bradle describes as central to how the company evaluates and works with technology vendors. "We established a cadence of ongoing meetings. Having that cadence was extremely effective as we built out our relationship with trying out new products and giving direct,

quick feedback," he says. "We've always felt like we can give feedback to Phillips Connect and get a response in return. That relationship has stayed the same ever since the beginning."

For James Grier, it is the consistency of the relationship over time that stands out. "We've had a very close connection with Phillips Connect since the start," he says. "We know that that door is always open to invite a conversation, and it hasn't fallen off. With the chaos of the industry over these last few years, we've continued to maintain a very strong relationship with Phillips Connect."



“We love the portal. It’s been a good relationship. It truly has.”

— James Grier,
Director of Fleet Service

is going to help, because an evolution of a trailer seems like you can only go so far, yet it looks like there’s no limit to what can be done.”

Looking Ahead

For Nussbaum, the future of smart trailer technology centers on two areas: cameras and AI. Morthland, who has watched connected commercial vehicle software evolve from its earliest days, sees camera technology as the next major frontier. “The cameras that we’ve tested have been awesome. Cameras are a big thing. And AI

Bradle’s vision points toward improved efficiency. “It’s all about efficiency: how efficient are we being with utilizing that asset, whether it’s operations, maintenance, or the customer.”

In the near term, Nussbaum keeps adding to what it runs on Phillips Connect. CargoVision and door sensors are rolling out across more of the fleet, TrailerID is moving toward full rollout, and wheelend temperature monitoring continues to expand as the team builds confidence in what it can prevent.

FOUNDED IN



FAITH

About Nussbaum Transportation

Founded in 1945 by Alden Nussbaum, Nussbaum Transportation is a truckload carrier headquartered in Hudson, Illinois. Operating nearly 600 trucks and 1,700 trailers, Nussbaum serves all 48 contiguous US states with its heaviest presence in the Midwest. The company is guided by its vision to positively impact the lives of everyone it interacts with, including drivers, customers, and partners alike.



