

1957

1967

1977

1987

1997

2007

FIFTY YEARS OF INNOVATION IN THE TIRE INDUSTRY

1994 – Bandag catches up to a major commercial trucking fleet's demands for more consistent service. The introduction of SystemBandag signals an ongoing commitment to help fleets better track their tire assets.



Tires, typically, are a fleet's second or third largest expense.

With the deregulation shake-up of the 1980s, fleets found themselves in a world of consolidation, expense shuffling and the need to maintain control of this ever-changing asset base.

Computer technology for use outside of the typical financial transaction was in its infancy; and, the need to track assets and the associated expense was looming on the horizon. However, the availability and price point of the technology prevented any supplier from fulfilling all the needs of a fleet.

Where are My Assets?

In the mid 1980s, Bandag began offering National Account contracts with fleets. Like most suppliers, Bandag offered these customers centralized invoicing and reporting. Having solved these basic information needs, some fleets were beginning to look at tackling a more complex need: tire asset tracking and accountability.

Every year, millions of casings are picked up from fleet customers by Bandag dealers. These tires can be retreaded, repaired, scrapped, purchased, warranted and warehoused. Since 1986, Bandag has sought to offer a solution to both the Bandag dealer, as well as fleets, to help track these assets from pickup through delivery.

Bandag Responds

In 1986, the Bandag Equipment Communication Network, or BECON, system was introduced at two manufacturing plants. This was Bandag's first retread plant system and utilized both checkpoint stations within the retread plant as well as handhelds. The primary focus was to track the tires inside the retread plant from checkpoint station to checkpoint station. The fleet's assets were tracked via work order documents and delivery tickets as the customer's tires were returned.

In the mid 1990s, Bandag partnered with Microsoft Consulting to engineer SystemBandag. Fleets such as Roadway Express, were asking Bandag for consistent reporting and a way to have their retread and repair specifications applied at all servicing dealers. Where the BECON system focused mainly on the retread plant, SystemBandag sought to incorporate more interaction and consistency of tracking assets between dealer store locations and fleet locations.

Along with the input from key fleets and Bandag dealers, SystemBandag was able to use the next generation of technology, utilizing wireless networks and the latest



Bandag dealers manufacture retreads to fleet's custom specifications such as type of tread, times retreaded, age of casing and number of repairs. A technician checks a fleet's specifications via Bandag's BASys Manufacturing system prior to repairing and retreading the tire casing.

handheld technology. The system also offered a centralized managed fleet specifications database to keep all servicing Bandag dealers in sync. The benefit to fleets was a strong reporting system and their retread and repair specifications were enforced through the retread manufacturing process.

The need for a system like SystemBandag was never in question, but by 2002, with only 14 retread plants in operation, Bandag felt that changes needed to occur to help realize the vision.

The market demand by both dealers and fleets made it obvious that these important services needed to be delivered at a faster pace. In 2003, Bandag acquired Open Road Technologies, which offered



A fleet's tire assets used to be tracked via pencil and paper. Today handheld computers and the internet allow fleet managers to know where their tires are at all times. Dennis Hall, product manager, franchise IT systems, Bandag, demonstrates a handheld used by Bandag dealers to track information about fleet customers' tires.

a product called RoadWare. This allowed Bandag to give dealers a system that was more mature at a lower price point, which in turn drove broader coverage. Now Bandag could promote an integrated service network to better serve fleet customers.

Since 2003, continued enhancements in addition to advancements in technology for handhelds, wireless networks, and the internet have allowed Bandag to offer a tire tracking software that is the leader in the industry and now runs in over 175 Bandag dealer retread plants. This system, named BASys Manufacturing, is an evolution of learnings from RoadWare, SystemBandag and BECON, to realize a vision of an integrated network of dealers.

New Horizons

From accurate and comprehensive reporting to web-based inventory tracking, BASys Manufacturing offers an approach that benefits both dealers and fleets. The next frontier is now underway as fleet managers can access information about their tire assets 24-7 via the internet with the BASys Fleet Inventory system.

At Bandag, it's never been about the technology – it's about leveraging technology to give the servicing dealers tools to give their fleets the best possible products and information.

By Dennis Hall