



Keio Business School

Tr@box Inc.

— In search of an on-line physical distribution network that will take Taking IT-oriented freight transportation into the next generation —

In late January 2001, Tadashi Tashiro, Vice President of Tr@box Inc., an Internet-based free truck-freight information supply company operating from a one-room office in a building located in the Nezu area, Bunkyo Ward, Tokyo, was pondering over the future direction of the operation of their site with his business partner, President Yasunori Fujikura, as a briefing session on their new proxy payment service scheduled for the following month drew closer.

Tr@box Inc.'s service boils down to mediating trucking service users looking for trucks and trucking businesses looking for freight by supplying them truck-freight information via the Internet. As the service supports NTT DoCoMo's i-mode mobile Internet service, it is accessible from i-mode compatible mobile phones. This, for example, allows a truck driver who has just delivered some freight to check truck-freight information for his return journey using a mobile phone. At present, member registration and information use are free, although there are plans to introduce a ¥1000 monthly membership fee from April 2001. The service was launched in November 1999, and the business was incorporated as a joint-stock company in March 2000. As of January 2001, the membership stood at more than 1400 businesses, with a growth rate of 100 per month.

However, competing truck-freight information services, including some with large capital backing, had been springing up, eager to capture a lion's share of the e-market catering for the trucking industry, which comprised 50,000 businesses (approx. 1 million employees) nationwide, most of them small or medium-sized. In the face of intensifying

Kazuo Kobayashi prepared this case under the supervision of Prof. Jiro Kokuryo of the Graduate School of Business Administration, Keio University as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation. (March 2001)

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