

# case study



LEFT:  
Paul Jnr and Ryan Shaw  
from BCS, with the first  
coach Paul S Winson  
ever bought

## MANAGING THE GARAGE MADE EASY



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/ Features Editor

Paul S Winson Coaches, with its **high-standard, high-performing workshop facility**, is now a paperless operation thanks to Blue Crystal Solutions

In many ways, Paul S Winson Coaches is a typical coach operator.

It's a family business, started by Paul Snr in 1976 as a truck operator, before buying coach operator Charnwood Coaches in 1983, and eventually going wholly to coach and bus operation.

And it's very much a family affair, run by Paul's three sons, Paul Jnr, Anthony and Matthew, with Paul Snr, now 69, and his wife Margaret still actively involved.

On the other hand, the business strives to be ahead of other coach operators and has diversified its work to include not just private hire, school private hire, home-to-school contracts, local service work and holidays, but also a large amount of contracted maintenance from other coach operators, and it acts as an agent for some suppliers.

To stay on top of the maintenance and parts sides of the business, for the last three years Engineering Director Paul Jnr has been a happy customer of Blue Crystal Solutions (BCS)'s complete maintenance system.

With four engineers including Paul and

an apprentice, 28 vehicles to look after plus a good basket of commercial work, and the cleanest workshop floor you've ever seen, this is a small but serious operator with a great need for efficiency.

"We're like a stick of rock," says Paul. "You can put whatever colour you like on each end of the rock; but when you snap it in half, you'll see quality running right through it."

The multi-platform BCS software has turned Paul S Winson Coaches (PSW)'s workshop into a high-performing paperless operation. Paul points to an empty unit in his office and says: "If you'd come here two years ago that side would've been covered with paper."

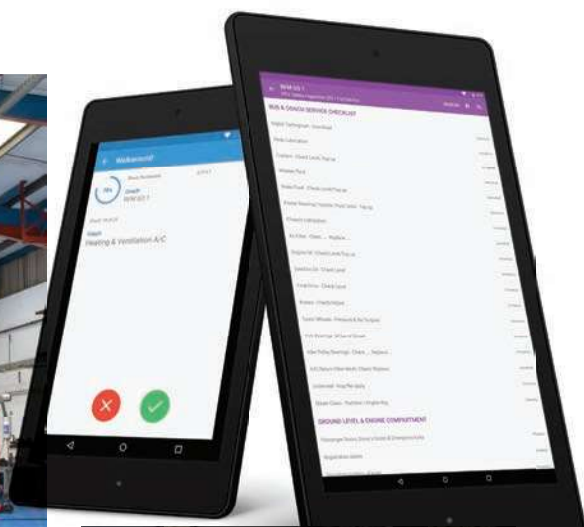
"We had documents in piles according to whether they were urgent, non-urgent, or other operators' work."

### 'Everything tells a story'

It's a comprehensive system, and it starts with walk-round checks, which are available as an app on the driver's phone or on the company's tablets.

Ryan Shaw, Project Manager for BCS, demonstrates the app, which is very simple to use and includes a function for taking photos of defects. It was developed last year

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with help from PSW.

The driver uploads this straight to the system, where the fleet manager can see all the walk-round checks with details including the driver's name and vehicle registration, the time it took to complete the check, and whether a defect was reported – and if so, the status of that defect. First thing in the morning the fleet manager will check all the walk-round checks, and later in the day any defects reported by drivers will flag up.

The fleet manager can also enter jobs into the system. Once a job is in, it doesn't need to be typed in again, and as the job is progressed, it forms a complete audit trail. Parts are allocated to certain jobs on the system too: Everything in the workshop becomes connected. "Everything should tell a story," says Paul, "from when a fault is found to when it's rectified and signed off."

Paul takes us step by step through the process. "Allocating and creating jobs is all really straightforward," he says. Each job is allocated to a technician, and there is an option to push jobs to a tablet, so the technician will see it without visiting the office.

Jobs are colour-coded according to whether they are urgent, non-urgent or outside work,

and "nothing is left sitting in the background," says Paul. The technician works through a list of defects – there's no sorting reams of documents by priority, no typing anything out twice. "All the work's done for you."

When the job is completed, the technician signs it off and it's marked on the system for Paul to provide a second signature – then it's complete and safe in the system, and if it's an outside job, an email goes to the customer; the system can price up these jobs as they progress.

## Good timing

Paul S Winson does various maintenance work for other coach operators, and those operators have also benefited from the system. They are alerted by email to the progress of the job, and there's a customer portal so they can see its status; Ryan describes it as "parcel tracking for maintenance".

Timing is very important to Paul, and how long each job takes is accurately monitored, ensuring no lost time.

The system is attractive and easy to use throughout. Asked if the staff have been easily persuaded to get on board with it, Paul says: "They've all taken it on well. We've had

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**LEFT:**  
Squeaky-clean workshop is a popular choice for other operators in the East Midlands

**CENTRE TOP:**  
The BCS software includes driver walk-round checks as well as fleet management

**CENTRE BOTTOM:**  
Stacks of paper records used to fill up this space in Paul's office

**ABOVE:**  
Paul S Winson is a family business running 28 vehicles

a few teething problems, but mostly with the actual tablets. The software is brilliant.”

But one of the key elements here is that the company hasn't been sold a system and simply left to get on with it; BCS are on hand all the time, always a phone call away. Says Paul: “The most important thing is being able to pick up the phone and talk to them. That's as important as the product itself.”

Adds Ryan: “In some cases operators want to be able to do something on the system we haven't thought of – we take requests.”

It's not the only way in which the supplier is similar to a coach operator. BCS is a family business; Ryan's parents own and run it, and everyone mucks in. “We don't tell operators that they'll get a call back in an hour,” says Ryan. “People will ask to speak to support... well, we're all support.”

“It's important to us for building relationships with our customers.”

## Get out what goes in

The system has brought much greater efficiency to PSW, in both cost and time.

The laborious tasks of printing off invoices and stuffing envelopes, as well as postage costs, are a thing of the past as customers are emailed their documents instead.

And the amount of paper saved is enormous – under the old system, each inspection record was worth five to seven sheets of A4 paper, including two job card sheets, the brake test report and wheel nut retorquer sheet.

As for time, Paul himself has more time to get into the workshop now, without frequently dashing to the office to consult a piece of paper or print one off. Productivity is higher too thanks to the system's time monitoring.

In the past a part that failed six months into its warranty was worth a lengthy hunt through binders to find the invoice. Now, it can be found very quickly and easily, along with its complete paper trail.

“It's only as good as what you put into it,” says Paul. “You can only get out what you put in.” What's more, the DVSA is keen for digital reporting and processes as part of the Earned Recognition Scheme.

## 'Another person'

There are exciting plans afoot for the BCS system. Accident reporting software is coming that will give drivers a step-by-step guide as to what to do after an incident, prompting them to ensure they get the other party's insurance details, as well as to take a photo of the incident. After all, the effects of shock are prone to making even the very best drivers forgetful.

When Ryan mentions this to Paul, Paul says: “If there's one thing we have problems with, it's getting information off drivers. It makes a lot of work for the office handling insurance claims when we don't get that information.”

Other new updates to the system include a coach scheduling module, a breakdown module and a rental module.

Paul S Winson is useful to BCS as a beta tester, one of a handful of operators that will try updates before they go live – for BCS's developers cannot be expected to know exactly what coach operators want and need.

This is a two-way relationship that has seen enormous benefits for PSW's staff and customers, and for BCS as well.

“For anyone interested in the system, it's important that they spend the time to have a look at it and get a demonstration,” says Paul, adding that PSW took it on very shortly after seeing a demo three years ago.

“For the amount of work it's saved us, it's like having another person in the office.”