



Case Study



TMSA Helped Light
the Spark for SPI
Logistics' 2X Growth
in Three Years

Corporate Member Stories – Featuring SPI Logistics’ VP of Sales and Marketing, Mike Mikulik, and VP of Finance & CFO, James Lemon

Background

SPI Logistics, a Canadian-based freight brokerage firm with a long-standing agent model, has experienced impressive momentum in recent years—nearly doubling in size over a three-year span. With exceptional agent retention and a steady rise in both revenue and recruitment, the company's success is the result of strong leadership, an agent-centric culture, and a renewed focus on strategic marketing.

While SPI’s commitment to supporting its agent network has always been strong, it was the discovery of TMSA that helped the company reframe its marketing efforts, refine its messaging, and amplify the value it provides to both its agents and the broader market.

“We had hired a marketing company who didn’t really know anything about transportation but knew stuff about marketing,” explains James Lemon, SPI’s Vice President of Finance and CFO. “We were getting a little traction, but not all that much. We needed new thinking—and it had to come from people who understood the logistics and transportation space.”

For James, attending the TMSA ELEVATE Conference with his VP of Sales and Marketing Mike Mikulik was pivotal.

“It was ingenious for Mike to bring me because it’s tough to get the finance guy on board unless he sees it firsthand,” said James Lemon, CFO.

“I’d say our primary source of growth has been the revamp of our marketing systems. We’re leap years ahead of where we were three years ago.”



Moving Marketing from Lackluster to Leading-Edge

Challenge

Any experienced sales or marketing professional will tell you; things are different in transportation and logistics. You must know the industry and the buyer to begin with. You also need to have what it takes to break through in this super competitive market.

SPI's message simply wasn't coming through. The missed opportunity was reflected in lackluster performance. Their low growth was only one symptom.

"I think we were just stuck in a rut," recalls Mike. "No one had heard of SPI. No one knew our core values or how we work with agents to promote their success. We were getting lost in the noise."

Their company, which was a haven for agents, was having a hard time attracting recruits. One onboarding a quarter wasn't cutting it.

The industry conferences they attended might have the occasional sales or marketing seminar, but what they really yearned for was a deep dive that would spur ideas and provide programs they could put into practice.

Best Practices and Practitioners All in One Place

Solution

It all started with a simple question: was there an organization out there focused on sales and marketing for the transportation and logistics sector? A quick search led SPI to TMSA—and a few months later, Mike attended his first TMSA annual conference (now known as the ELEVATE Conference).

In 2022, he brought James Lemon along for a deeper dive—and that experience helped solidify buy-in at the highest levels of the company. Together, they attended sessions on sales strategy, social media, podcasting, and even a panel discussion featuring shippers offering insights into how they want to be sold.

The 2022 ELEVATE Conference in Orlando featured an all-star cast of industry influencers and podcast gurus. Blythe Brumleve, Trey Griggs and Chris Jolly were speakers. Mike and James were able to catch their seminars and then connect with them afterwards. “We basically told them, ‘This is what we want to do. We want to start podcasting and we have no idea how to do it,’” Mike recounts. “We want to get our name out there and we want to start talking about our story as a company and how we recruit and how we don't lose agents.”

By the time they returned to Canada, they had already mapped out a new marketing strategy on the plane.



**“Once I was there, I saw how far behind we were,”
Mike says. “We weren’t doing any of the things
people were talking about, and it really opened my
eyes to what was possible.”**

ROI Your CFO Will Love

Member Benefits

SPI put what they learned directly to work on a new podcasting program they developed with conference presenter Chris Jolly. Sidebars with peers who are in sales and marketing in the actual transportation and logistics field was an unusual opportunity. Mike and James had the chance to compare notes and gain exposure to best practices in branding when it came time to relaunch SPI's website.

The 3-day ELEVATE Conference was an efficient deep dive into issues sales and marketing pros spend most of the year wrestling with by themselves. Mike was surprised by how open and helpful the TMSA community was and how freely members shared experiences at the conference.

"The people at TMSA are so open to sharing their successes, their failures, what's working, and what's not working. Everyone's great at collaborating," Mike points out.

The experience continued after the conference. The team found opportunities to refresh trends and best practices by attending TMSA webinars throughout the year. In addition, a member Slack channel provides an ongoing forum.

Over the years SPI has deepened its commitment to the TMSA community and expanded its involvement in the awards committee. Giving back has been a rewarding experience for the team. "You learn a lot working really closely with people on committees," Mike says. "And you're developing some pretty close bonds."

"Other industry conferences may have one panel over the course of three days, but ELEVATE is entirely sales and marketing—which is the lifeblood of most companies," James says. "When you send your marketing people and your salespeople to ELEVATE, all they're getting is sales and marketing."

More Agents and Higher Revenue

Business Results

By the one-year mark after attending TMSA ELEVATE in 2022, SPI had grown its business 38%. Central to that success was the podcast campaign launched by SPI following the 2022 conference. The campaign initially featured conference presenter, Chris Jolly and has evolved to include additional influencers and TMSA conference presenters, Blythe Brumleve and Trey Griggs.

The podcast campaign targeting agent prospects largely features SPI's own agents—a practice most freight brokerages would avoid for fear of their agents being poached. TMSA served as the conduit to the best practices, expert guidance, and peer support SPI needed to take a leap into the unknown and ultimately experience wild success. In the three years since they became involved in TMSA, SPI has nearly doubled in size and their podcasting has greatly evolved.

In addition to helping build brand and business, the compelling podcast content is resonating with agents. In just three years, agent onboardings have increased from one a quarter to 2 - 4 a month. "And they're a lot more qualified than they were in the past because they've all listened to the stories of our other agents," Mike adds.

2024 saw SPI's 45-minute podcasts being augmented by "Shorts" which are under a minute and appear on LinkedIn as well as YouTube. In the three years since the conference, SPI has produced 499 podcasts available on YouTube and they now have hundreds of subscribers to their YouTube channel.

38%

business growth
in 1 year

500%

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onboardings

499

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TMSA is the only association dedicated to advancing the success of marketing and sales professionals in all modes of the commercial freight transportation market. From president and vice president to manager, director and coordinator, members are at all levels and represent all market segments including motor carriers, 3PLs, railroads, air carriers, ocean lines, port authorities, OEMs, media and suppliers. TMSA's mission is to enable sales and marketing professionals to learn and give back to the transportation and logistics industry through education, connections and resources, ultimately strengthening their individual development, their businesses and the industry-at-large.



SPI is the leading logistics firm in North America, with a respected network of 65 offices and 54,000+ carriers throughout Canada and the United States. For over 45 years SPI has worked hard to build enduring, first-class relationships with our shippers, receivers, and carriers. SPI is more than just another transportation network or third-party logistics hub; we are a dedicated team of transportation professionals united by one singular purpose – expediting your success.

This case study was written by TMSA Partner Member Conrad Winter.