

ROBERTO BALDWIN GEAR 04.17.13 6:30 AM

SHIPSHAPE: TRACKING 40 YEARS OF FEDEX TECH



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FORTY YEARS AGO today, 186 packages were shuffled around a card table and loaded onto 14 Dassault Falcon jets. Next-day delivery history had been made.

FedEx's 40-year history is about far more than an unimaginable number of overnight deliveries. It's a case study in creating a service, then pushing technology forward to ensure that service actually works on a large scale. When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight, you need powerful technology. And sometimes you have to create it.

Given the technological and logistical juggernaut that FedEx is today, it's ironic, and perhaps quaint, that process was largely a manual one when the company began, with little in the way of sophisticated technology to help guide the packages. But as the service grew, it became apparent that the company needed more than just a fleet of jets to meet demand.

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The system was then made available via a customer service line. If you needed to know where your package was, you would call FedEx, something the company used as a marketing tool.

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All photos: Courtesy FedEx