

Modernizing Route Management for Freight and Sameday Transportation Operations



With Descartes Route Planner™ and Descartes Mobile™, Day & Ross modernized route planning and execution for its Freight and Sameday divisions at multiple terminals across the country. The Descartes solution allowed Day & Ross to improve delivery operations and customer service by streamlining order processing and invoicing through to pickup and delivery.

“With Descartes Route Planner, as soon as a customer places an order, it’s now handled without any manual intervention. Requests are recorded and sent automatically through the Descartes network to handheld devices used by drivers. From soup to nuts, we’ve automated the process.”

David Rea

Vice President of Information Services
The Day & Ross Transportation Group

Company Profile

Day & Ross Freight
Transportation & Logistics Services

Descartes Solutions

Descartes Route Planner™
Descartes Mobile™

About the Client

With twelve consecutive years as one of Canada’s Best Managed Companies, Day & Ross Freight has become the national carrier of choice for thousands of Canadian companies. With service to all ten provinces, Day & Ross offers customers direct Less-than-Truckload (LTL) and Truckload (TL) service anywhere in Canada, as well as to and from the United States and Mexico.

Quick Overview**Challenge**

Overhauling the “Old Way”

Solution

Automating it All

Results

- Increased Paperless Processes
- Enhanced Productivity
- Expanded Visibility
- Increased Customer Service Levels
- Proof-of-Delivery
- Better Resource Management

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Challenge: Overhauling the “Old Way”

Since its inception in 1950, New Brunswick-based Day & Ross Transportation Group has grown from a handful of trucks hauling between just a few provinces in eastern Canada into one of Canada’s largest national transportation providers. Today, the company has more than 2,500 employees in terminals across Canada, 3,500 owner/operators and 3,300 company-owned trucks and trailers. Day & Ross provides a variety of transportation and logistics solutions, including Day & Ross Freight for full-service hauling throughout North America, and Sameday Worldwide for fragile, awkward and higher-value freight.

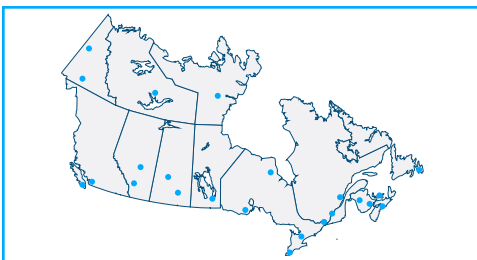
Of the millions of fleet vehicles on the road every day in North America, the overwhelming majority are managed by paper-based operations. Day & Ross was no exception. David Rea, Vice President of Information Services at Day & Ross describes the company’s traditional route planning and delivery practices, “Our business was very paper-based. There was always the signing of manifests and paper, and that paper would be brought back to the office where it would be scanned. We would just centralize a data entry location and use that sort of process to create the order, which would then follow through the life of the shipment. Activities were all very paper-based, and driven by manual data entry.”

Moving from this type of hands-on environment to fully automated route planning, exception reporting and driver communications involved more, however, than just the quick application of some new functionality. Day & Ross needed to overhaul its own processes and systems first. Rea explains, “We started using Descartes Route Planner with a prototype that we put together and ran in Atlantic Canada. We had some challenges, mostly process problems, and also issues with older backend systems as well as change management. Once we worked through all this, we decided that we would be wise to get all of our process and change management issues sorted out and then roll the Descartes solution out across the country.”

Rea elaborates on the legacy systems, “There are two primary systems used by these divisions. One is what I would call a manifesting/invoicing system. It allows us to record any pickup, any delivery, and through all of recording those events and assessors like tailgates or waiting times. From this we create an invoice which is sent to the customer. The other system allows us to dispatch trucks and record where they’re going—a transportation management system as it were.” The two systems virtually ran on paper and also operated independently, which fueled even more paper to manually exchange information between them. The Descartes solutions, however, are designed to integrate easily with existing order and transportation management systems, and to streamline the flow of real-time information between them as customer requirements, routes and orders change. “The Descartes solution has allowed us to automate the entire process right from pickup through to delivery,” emphasizes Rea.



The company also needed to standardize route planning and execution procedures while taking into account regional differences and expectations. At a certain level, Day & Ross had consistent processes across the country, but operations and customer expectations varied to some degree in each market. As an example, Rea compared Atlantic Canada with larger urban areas. “Outside of Halifax or Moncton, the density isn’t there to support multiple routes. Ninety-nine percent of the drivers that we have are owner/operators with their own trucks and they have assigned areas or routes that they follow. When you get to a city like Toronto or Montreal, it’s a little bit different because there are density issues you need to take into account.”

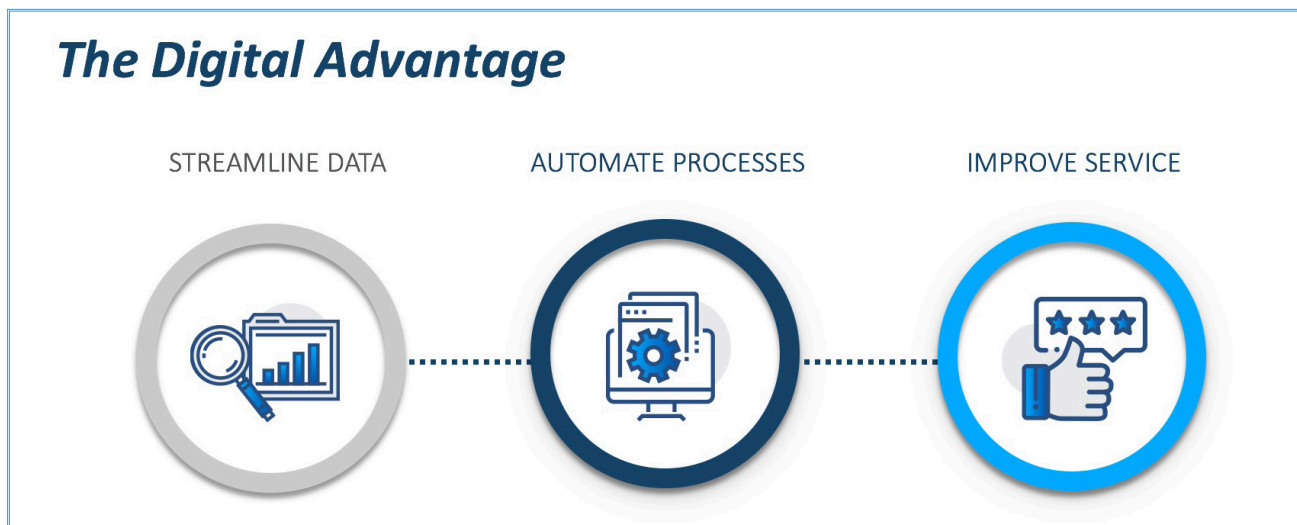


Route planning and other processes needed to take into account regional market differences and densities

Slightly different payment practices and variations in the flow of freight also affect operations. Rea expands, “In Ontario and Atlantic Canada, a certain amount of freight flows into and between those particular markets whereas a lot flows into the West so the effect on linehaul is up and down in the volume of work. This affects your activity on the dock and how busy you are.” Rea continues, “While the differences tend to be subtle, they’re significant enough to make critical differences when you’re rolling out technology like this. We chose to not rush because we were very cognizant of the potential enormous impact on our service levels.” For Day & Ross, the Descartes solution was flexible enough to easily accommodate these types of regional differences in transportation practices.

Solution: Automating it All

Having updated processes and procedures in place meant that Day & Ross could implement the Descartes solution nationwide. "I've been rolling it out across Canada in both divisions for about a year now, and I have three more terminals to do," notes Rea. Day & Ross is equipping each terminal and its drivers with the Descartes Route Planner and Descartes Mobile applications. Descartes Route Planner is a web-based solution that helps companies with dynamic delivery environments, like Day & Ross, to improve reliability and reduce operating costs. It's combined with Descartes Mobile, a GPS-based tracking application with integrated wireless communications for real-time visibility into driver status and vehicle location, and real-time information exchange between the fleet and the office. The complete solution helps companies drive greater efficiencies out of fleet operations and increase responsiveness to customers.



For Day & Ross, the order experience is an area that has been significantly improved for customers. Traditionally, order taking and driver communications were managed through one of the company's many call centers. Customers phoned in with order details and calls were placed to drivers' cell phones with pickup information. Now, as soon as a customer places an order, whether by phone or self-service website, it is handled by Descartes Route Planner without any human intervention. "The request is recorded and sent automatically through the data networks to a device the driver has, which says, 'Please go here and pick this up.' From soup to nuts we've automated the process," enthuses Rea.

To receive routing and pickup or delivery information, drivers now use Intermec CN70 ruggedized handheld devices, which are also used to capture signatures at loading docks. Enhanced by signature capture and even pictures, paperless proof of delivery significantly reduces customer calls and improves claim resolution. With Descartes Mobile, Day & Ross can track and monitor the location of vehicles in real-time throughout the day, and can communicate with drivers instantly using two-way mobile communications. With the solution in place, drivers and dispatchers have improved control over planning. Drivers spend more time behind the wheel and dispatchers gain productive time for higher value work. "What you can do is you can plan your day a little better because drivers know this is the work list for the day," adds Rea.

According to Rea, the process of rolling out the software went relatively smoothly. As part of its change management approach, Day & Ross invested significant time and effort to introduce nearly 1,000 drivers to the new system, and to explain how it works and why it's an improvement over the old ways of doing things. "Owner/operators are independent business people and so they want to know, 'Is this going to make my life easier? Is it going to make it harder? Is it going to speed things up? Is it going to slow it down? What's going to happen to my pay?' That's why we wanted to focus on the change management issues because we just don't tell them, 'Do this.' It doesn't work that way."

Parting Thoughts

While going paperless had its challenges, Day & Ross is seeing results that make the investment worthwhile, even factoring in the costs associated with revising old procedures and deploying new hardware and software. With the Descartes solution supporting automated route planning and execution, Day & Ross has created efficiencies at key intervals in the delivery process from ordering through delivery and collection to end-of-day reconciliation. They've also been able to relocate personnel from terminals to a centralized call center location, and continue to move customers to web-based self-service options for ordering. Once the deployment is complete, Rea expects to have his hands full with new IT projects, one of which may be expanding the Descartes solution with the appointment scheduling module to let customers request delivery windows which are optimized against available time and resources.

Whatever comes next, Rea shares these insights on the value of technology for transportation companies, "The big national and regional players take technology very seriously, and I say that because I meet them at various industry events and we talk. But it's not technology for the sake of technology—it's because it really can add productivity to your processes. Customers are also demanding better awareness and visibility of what's going on. I would also add that many of the things that our industry can do to be more productive and provide better service are not rocket science. There's a lot of technology available that's not complicated and not necessarily expensive—and the real challenge lies in adapting your processes and implementing it!"

Benefits:



Increased Paperless Processes

Eliminated paper-based practices and reduced manual data entry procedures from order processing and invoicing through to pickup through delivery.



Enhanced Productivity

Increased productive time for drivers and dispatchers with automated route management and two-way wireless communications.



Expanded Visibility

Increased responsiveness with better insight into delivery times as well as added communication via two-way driver connectivity.



Increased Customer Satisfaction

Enhanced customer service with improved delivery performance and real-time visibility into vehicle location and driver status.



Proof-of-Delivery

Shortened billing cycles, minimized paperwork and decreased claims with electronic signature capture upon delivery.



Better Resource Management

Leveraged existing investments in order and transportation management systems by easily integrating Descartes solution.