

Crate&Barrel Home Delivery Success

Crate&Barrel

Company Profile

Crate and Barrel
Housewares and Furniture Retailer

Descartes Solutions

Route Planning and Visibility
Home Delivery

Since Crate and Barrel first opened its doors in 1962, the housewares and furniture retailer has expanded its operations to over 160 stores serving customers in 29 markets. The company, which has grown by 6 to 8 stores each year, has three primary distribution centers located in New Jersey, Chicago and San Francisco. Deliveries are shipped out of these 300,000 square foot facilities to 21 conveniently located cross-docks where goods are sorted and loaded onto trucks for delivery to customers within a 50 to 100 mile radius. To complete annual deliveries of 300,000, Crate and Barrel has 80 to 85 delivery trucks on the road each day. On average, these trucks make 16 stops per day and even more in densely populated cities like New York. While the retailer owns a small fleet in the Boston area, the majority of deliveries are managed by third-party logistics providers.

Challenge

Manual Delivery Processes and Lack of Visibility Hampered Delivery Process

For Crate and Barrel, the delivery process had always been managed manually. Using online and in-store sales transaction data, dispatchers would assign deliveries to one of its many fixed routes. While each route covered a specific area, the actual delivery schedule had to be fine-tuned and mapped out by hand.

While its manual processes were inefficient, the biggest challenge was the lack of visibility into deliveries on the road. According to Pat Gottmann, home delivery manager at Crate and Barrel, "It would take five phone calls or more to figure out if our customers were going to get their deliveries on time. There was no easy way for us to know what deliveries a driver had already made and which ones were still to follow. We were not happy with the impact on our customer service."

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Solution

Descartes' Home Delivery Solution Optimized Route Planning and Provided Real-time Visibility into Delivery Operations

Crate and Barrel made the decision to deploy Descartes' Home Delivery solution. This cloud-based solution provided Crate and Barrel with immediate, anywhere access to delivery information which meant new maps were always available as the retailer expanded to new markets. "We could simply plug into the service as we opened new locations and gain immediate access to the information we required to deliver effective service," explains Gottmann.

Results

Today, Crate and Barrel has consolidated their smaller routes into larger routes covering greater areas, so it is rare that a customer has to wait for an open delivery day. With Descartes' solution, optimizing routes for efficiency, the retailer is using fewer trucks to handle increasingly more deliveries. Delivery windows have also been narrowed from four hours to two.

Crate and Barrel also has real time visibility into the status of its deliveries anywhere in the country. "It's incredible that at any time during the day we know exactly how each route is progressing; how many vehicles/drivers are on the road; how many deliveries each driver is doing; where their last stop was, and more," says Gottmann.

Crate and Barrel also has the ability to capture and report on its delivery operations, and use the insight gained to make better business decisions. "Previously, we only knew how many deliveries were going out and how many pieces were being delivered. Now, we can be more strategic and use this information to drive continuous improvements into our delivery operations." With real-time access to delivery information, call center staff can begin doing customer surveys almost immediately after a delivery is completed.

Driver compliance of schedules and routes is now typically at 98%, thanks to a training and compliance program implemented by Crate and Barrel and reporting processes that clearly identify which drivers and locations are straying from their optimized plans. "Having immediate feedback is huge – we can analyze individual markets and drivers, identify where additional training may be required, and use the insight to continually improve our service." Thanks to Descartes, it is now significantly easier for Crate and Barrel to make 300,000 home deliveries in a year.

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