

The Road to Efficiency with Descartes



Solaray, America's sunglass company, required an optimized routing and scheduling solution to distribute eyewear and other merchandise to a complex network of retail locations. The company implemented Descartes Route Planner™ On-demand with strategic route modeling capabilities to streamline its Direct Store Delivery (DSD) program, increasing driver efficiency, reducing transportation costs, and taking customer service to new heights.

“With such a high level of scheduling optimization and routing efficiency, we were able to move from a five-day work plan to a four-day plan. We’ve not only been able to increase service frequency to our accounts within a shorter time frame but we’ve essentially gained an extra day each week. Our reps are loving it!”

Rachel Hood, Director of Route Management, Solaray LLC

Company Profile

Solaray LLC
Eyewear, Gifts and Accessories

Descartes Solutions

Descartes Route Planner™ On-demand

About the Client

Solaray LLC has been America's sunglass company for more than 40 years. Headquartered in Sapulpa, OK, Solaray offers high-quality eyewear, wireless accessories, lighters, promotional products, and gift and apparel items. The company supplies more than 25,000 retail locations through its Direct Store Delivery program.

Quick Overview

Challenge

Lack of Automation Impedes Operational Performance

Solution

Strategic Routing Drives Savings

Results

- Increased Productivity
- Heightened Customer Service
- Significant Cost Savings
- Improved Visibility

Challenge: Lack of Automation Impedes Operational Performance

Solaray's service representatives distribute sunglasses, wireless accessories, lighters, and gift and apparel items on a weekly basis to 25,000+ retail locations across the U.S. The company's four-week routing plans, formulated manually using a wall-mounted map, were hindering its customer service efforts. Hampered by a long planning horizon and lack of real-time visibility, Solaray was unable to inform customers precisely when to expect deliveries. In addition, drivers endured long weeks of driving with significant fuel expenses. Solaray required an automated routing and scheduling solution to optimize the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of its DSD program.

Solution: Strategic Routing Drives Savings

As part of its DSD program, Solaray service representatives deliver sunglasses and other merchandise to convenience stores, travel centers, gas stations, and truck stops across the U.S. each week. Working with a 28-day plan, Solaray uses Descartes' strategic route modeling capabilities to determine the most cost-effective routing for the distribution of merchandise to its retail network. Strategic routing plans are seamlessly integrated with Descartes Route Planner On-demand to manage the company's day-to-day execution of deliveries for 56 service representatives.

Using the Descartes solution, Solaray increased operational performance by reducing the number of miles driven, decreasing the overall cost per stop, and increasing the service frequency for its customers. By achieving such a high level of routing efficiency, the company was able to shorten its delivery work week from five to four days. In addition, Solaray added 200 more stores to its territory since implementing the Descartes system and expects to expand the solution to support the new locations.

"The Descartes solution helps us move our merchandise to our customers more quickly and efficiently while achieving enviable transportation savings," said Rachel Hood, Solaray's Director of Route Management. "A savings of 30 miles per week per service rep translates to more than 80,000 fewer miles driven each year. At this rate, the addition of another 100 service reps will triple our transportation savings."

The Descartes route planning solution also gave Solaray the ability to visualize drivers on their routes. With real-time visibility into the daily activities of its service reps, the company can now provide delivery status updates and better manage customer enquiries.

Results:



Increased Productivity

With more efficient route planning and optimized scheduling, Solaray was able to add approximately 200 stores to its territory while simultaneously eliminating an entire day from the delivery week, moving from a 5-day work plan to a 4-day plan.



Heightened Customer Service

With Descartes, Solaray increased delivery frequency to its customers while providing more consistent service. Real-time visibility of drivers en route enabled Solaray to manage customer delivery expectations and proactively resolve issues.



Significant Cost Savings

Due to more efficient routing, the Descartes solution reduced overall driver mileage and fuel consumption. With less time spent driving and more stops per route, Solaray's 56 service reps are saving 80,000+ miles annually.



Improved Visibility

By replacing its manual system with Descartes, Solaray can track and monitor the status of its service representatives in the field in real-time, increasing driver accountability and productivity and keeping customers informed of delivery status.