

Boosting Distribution Efficiency with Descartes Route Planning



As a leading supplier of roofing and building supplies to residential and commercial customers in Michigan and Northern Ohio, family-owned Wimsatt Building Materials required a route planning optimization and execution solution to improve the efficiency of its distribution network. Wimsatt implemented Descartes route planning, increasing fleet capacity, curtailing operating costs, and delivering an exceptional standard of customer care.

“By optimizing delivery routes for upwards of 80 vehicles, we’ve been able to increase efficiency in vehicle routing, asset tracking, fleet maintenance, Department of Transportation (DOT) compliance, and more. We’ve improved asset utilization and refined our processes to hone and heighten the customer experience—all while reducing our operational expenses. It’s been a real gamechanger.”

Barry Crane

Director of Logistics, Wimsatt Building Materials

Company Profile

Wimsatt Building Materials
Supplier of Building Materials

Descartes Solution

Descartes Route Planning

About the Client

Serving builders and contractors from eight locations across Michigan and Northern Ohio, Wimsatt Building Materials is a distributor of quality steep slope & low slope roofing, exterior cladding, windows, doors, and specialty building materials. Wimsatt is the leader in unassisted rooftop delivery, pioneering the service more than 30 years ago.

Quick Overview**Challenge**

Delivery Complexity Compromises Productivity

Solution

Route Optimization Drives Performance

Results

- Lower Operational Costs
- Elevated Customer Experience
- Increased Efficiency
- Improved Asset Utilization

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Challenge: Delivery Complexity Compromises Productivity

Wimsatt stakes its 80-year reputation on an inimitable 'Gold Standard Delivery Experience.' From unassisted rooftop delivery of shingles to delivery of low slope roofing materials, exterior cladding, decking and windows, Wimsatt distributes a broad spectrum of materials to residential and commercial sites using multiple types of vehicles and cranes. With a legacy route planning system that no longer provided the level of automation and optimization the company required, Wimsatt sought to further enhance productivity with more advanced optimization, aiming to tightly match products and delivery requirements with each vehicle to increase distribution efficiency and control operating costs.

Solution: Route Optimization Drives Performance

Routing vehicles across nine daily delivery windows, Wimsatt employs various types of trucks, cranes, and equipment—from conveyor trucks, box vans and pickup trucks to telehandlers, boom lifts and tail-mounted fork lifts—to deliver materials to residential and commercial job sites. Building on the efficiency improvements realized by moving from more manual routing practices to automated route planning, Wimsatt deployed Descartes route planning to further optimize delivery performance, productivity, and profitability.

Integrated seamlessly with its Agility ERP to ensure robust enterprise-wide accounting and inventory management, the cloud-based Descartes route planning and execution solution optimizes Wimsatt's distribution routes by considering geographic location, delivery windows, vehicle capacities, equipment type, and other constraints. Using the solution, Wimsatt has dramatically shortened the time to plan the next day's delivery routes.

"As professional contractors, our customers require timely and accurate deliveries to keep their crews operating efficiently," said Barry Crane, Director of Logistics at Wimsatt. "With Descartes' solution, we've seen more than 20% improvement in distribution efficiency. Plus, mobile proof-of-delivery (POD) and real-time notifications of delivery status take the customer experience to a new level."

With mobile POD, Wimsatt verifies deliveries at the customer location by capturing pictures electronically. When deliveries are unattended, the solution also allows Wimsatt to generate proof-of-delivery emails that are sent, with pictures, to the customer. In addition, pictures of deliveries can also be used to eliminate invalid claims of damage to either products or the customer site (e.g., driveway).

Crane added, "Building on this success, we're focused on fine-tuning optimization capabilities to specific workflows and vehicles to further maximize efficiency. The Descartes solution tightly matches products and delivery requirements with vehicle type, enabling us to improve control over the operating costs for each type of vehicle. We expect an additional 20-25% boost in distribution efficiency with Descartes' intelligent optimization."

Results:



Lower Operational Costs

By optimizing route planning and execution, the automated Descartes solution helps Wimsatt curtail operating expenses by boosting operational efficiency, reducing missed deliveries, increasing fleet capacity, and minimizing distance traveled and fuel consumption.



Increased Efficiency

Wimsatt's dispatch teams can quickly and easily plan optimal daily routes. The company has increased operational efficiency by 20%, maximizing route density and ensuring materials and delivery requirements are tightly coordinated with vehicle type.



Elevated Customer Experience

With intelligent route planning, real-time visibility, and mobile proof-of-delivery, Wimsatt has improved delivery performance, ensuring contractors get the right materials at the right time. Notifications of delivery status keep customers informed throughout the last mile.



Improved Asset Utilization

The Descartes solution enhances Wimsatt's fleet utilization, driving profitability with optimized routes that consider specific customer delivery requirements, vehicle type, geographic zones, and other limitations to maximize efficiency.