

Transforming Customer Experience by Centralizing Building Supply Distribution



New Zealand's leading supplier of building materials and hardware, PlaceMakers differentiated its customer delivery experience by centralizing the distribution function for 63 stores nationwide using the Descartes' route planning software. By optimizing same- and next-day route planning with the cloud-based solution, the company maximized fleet and mobile resource utilization and efficiency to enhance customer service and reduce operational costs.

"It was an enormous business challenge to completely transform the customer delivery experience and digitize internal workflows. We've received great customer feedback on the improved service using our own fleet and drivers, as well as praise about the improved communication and image capture on invoices. And we've started to win customers over from competitors as a result!"

Wayne Armstrong

Head of Digital Channels, PlaceMakers

Company Profile

PlaceMakers
Building Materials & Hardware

Descartes Solution

Dynamic Route Planning

About the Client

A division of The Fletcher Building Group, PlaceMakers is New Zealand's leading and largest supplier of building materials and hardware. With 63 stores serving retail and trade customers, the supplier offers over 74,000 different product lines for different stages of a build, including providing services to fully-install solutions.

Quick Overview**Challenge**

Elevating the Customer Experience

Solution

Centralized Route Planning
Drives Efficiency

Results

- Customer Service Differentiation
- Increased Efficiency
- Reduced Costs
- Swift, Robust Rollout

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Challenge: Elevating the Customer Experience

Serving over 300,000 retail and trade customers and completing more than 250,000 annual deliveries—often involving large, unwieldy freight (e.g., timber, panels) requiring craning onto building sites—PlaceMakers sought to optimize route planning and digitize its internal processes to increase delivery efficiency, reduce costs, and strengthen customer relationships. With the aim of transforming the customer delivery experience, PlaceMakers wanted to transition its delivery model away from each branch performing its own dispatch and freight, with multiple local and regional 3PL suppliers, to a centralized logistics function and the company's own fleet.

Solution: Centralized Route Planning Drives Efficiency

With the intent of cementing delivery as a key strategic competitive advantage, PlaceMakers worked with Bestrane, the authorized Descartes reseller in Australia and New Zealand, to implement Descartes' route planner software. The building materials supplier deployed the solution to centralize distribution operations, automating and optimizing delivery route planning and execution for 63 stores across the country and 74,000 product lines.

"Although the Descartes deployment is just 60% complete, we've already seen a 40-50% increase in delivery satisfaction and achieved significant financial savings. We've also reduced inbound calls by 16%, increased load utilization by 13%, and reduced loading times by 14%," said Wayne Armstrong, Head of Digital Channels at PlaceMakers.

Integrated seamlessly with PlaceMakers' legacy enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, Descartes' route planning software offers unique capabilities, including mapping of the building site with different visualization layers (e.g., property boundaries), capacity calculation for each vehicle despite a wide range of product shapes and sizes, notifications at all stages of the delivery lifecycle, and address validation to ensure every delivery has a valid x,y coordinate.

Armstrong added, "With direct integration to our courier company, we've been able to offer a new quick delivery service: within 60 or 180 minutes! Plus, we were able to adapt the Descartes solution to pick and package orders ready for transport with full integration and APIs into a 30-year-old ERP. No other application could handle our combination of products and different fulfillment types."

Results:



Customer Service Differentiation

By improving on-time delivery performance, increasing order accuracy, and enabling customer pre- and post-delivery notifications, PlaceMakers increased customer satisfaction and boosted its delivery Net Promoter Score (NPS) by 40-50%.



Increased Efficiency

Centralized distribution operations and optimized route generation, including same-day route planning and execution, improved operational efficiency. Image capture of load completion and electronic signatures reduced inbound calls and delivery disputes.



Reduced Costs

With increased load utilization, decreased loading times, centralized route planning, and mobile applications for route execution, PlaceMakers realized significant savings in operating costs and resources.



Swift, Robust Rollout

Referred to as "the best central project implementation ever," the accelerated branch-by-branch rollout was supported by weekly updates and reviews on all key metrics and issues, forming deep connections to enable continuous long-term improvement.