

Paperless Logistics Increases Level Of Service



One way to improve service for the contractor market is to go paperless with delivery services.

"In the building supply space, where contractors have to deal with construction jobs and schedules and crews, price is a factor, but service is the ultimate objective," says Lee Karlinsky, senior vice-president of emerging markets with logistics software-as-a-solution (SaaS) provider Descartes Systems Group.

Construction jobs are dependent on time, resource, and budget constraints. Contractors need to be able to count on retailers to supply their materials when and where they need them. Effective logistics management is the key to providing this service.

"Every retailer that provides jobsite or home delivery has to contend with constrained resources: vehicles, time, drivers, capacity, etc.," says Karlinsky. "In the building supply space in particular, retailers are not just competing on cost, but also on service because they have to figure out ways in which they can supply the customer, make their profit, and still meet the jobsite and construction schedule."

When a contractor orders materials, many LBM dealers "have a guy with a spreadsheet and a map manually figuring out [how to deliver the product] based on where he thinks his drivers currently are and who can get back to the yard to move those goods."

With Descartes' delivery solution, delivery drivers access their schedules using a mobile device, with GPS information updated every few minutes.

Unfortunately, says Karlinsky, paper-based practices for logistics management can no longer keep pace with a highly variable, highly mobile construction industry.

Paperless And Real-time Solution

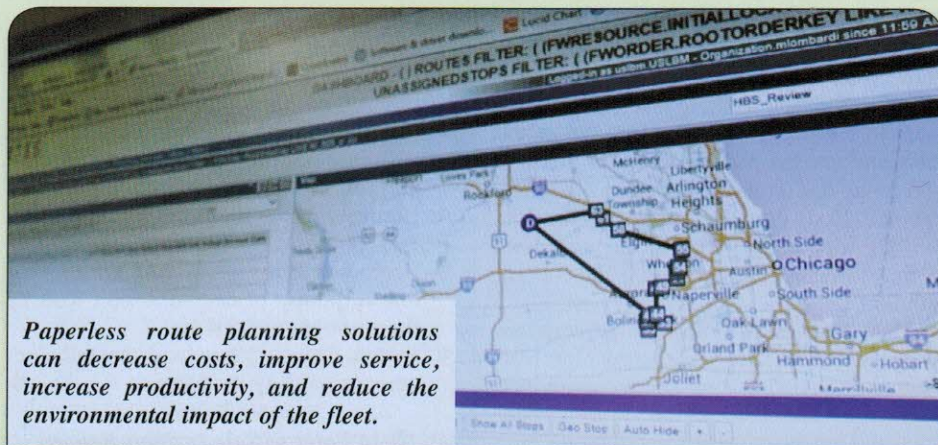
Descartes has come up with a paperless, real-time home and jobsite delivery SaaS solution for home improvement and LBM retailers. This solution manages and sequences all the complexities of delivering

materials and equipment to a construction site, including dispatching and scheduling, route planning, unique delivery needs, loading and unloading times, different types of equipment needed (such as truck size, boom trucks, dump trucks, off-loading equipment, forklifts), availability of staff, inventory requirements, weather and environmental factors, and proof of delivery.

The company's customers include Sydney, Australia-based BC Sands, an independent building and landscape supplier. It implemented the same-day optimization capabilities of Descartes' delivery solution to automate delivery appointment scheduling, route optimization, and proof-of-delivery processes for their contractor customers.

"BC Sands is niche focused on sand and construction projects so they're dealing with odd-sized vehicles – dump trucks for raw sand and other vehicles for bagged sand, for example," says Karlinsky. "Those bags may need to be craned up to the rooftop of a building. They get some odd requirements and a large percentage of their business is done in the same day."

The move took the company from 'best guess' times for deliveries to accurate, scheduled time windows, says Mark Parsons, managing director at BC Sands. "By optimizing planning, scheduling, and routing, we've lowered our distribution costs. We're getting more capacity out of our fleet and have reduced the number of returned loads by ensuring the right product is loaded onto



Paperless route planning solutions can decrease costs, improve service, increase productivity, and reduce the environmental impact of the fleet.

the right truck. And we're able to better manage a huge array of products in vehicles with different dimensions and capabilities. There was no way of growing without some level of technology like this."

Quick To Implement

The system is quick to implement and available in the cloud or on the premises and it addresses the entire delivery lifecycle for wholesalers, distributors, and retailers who need robust same- and next-day delivery capabilities, says Karlinsky. The platform provides delivery appointment scheduling, delivery route planning and execution, real-time GPS-based mobile solutions for route management, proof-of-delivery, and automated pre- and post-delivery notification services.

Dynamic appointment scheduling gives suppliers insight into the impact of unforeseen changes and the tools to exert more control over variables. Suppliers can use this technology to make on-the-fly adjustments and immediately communicate the details to all participants and stakeholders.

Contractors, meanwhile, can know exactly when material is arriving at various work-sites. Drivers access their delivery schedules using a mobile device, while GPS information is received every few minutes to esti-

mate travel time, monitor delivery appointments, and keep all stakeholders updated, without the need for drivers to make a phone call which is illegal while driving in some regions. Salespeople also remain updated, so they can provide accurate information to their customers. In fact, with one click, contractors can call a salesperson to place an order from an itemized list of materials.

BC Sands automated its whole order-to-cash cycle by taking photos and signature captures in real time for proof of delivery. The proof of delivery document is geo-stamped with a photo of the goods delivered, "and they can invoice against that faster," says Karlinsky. "They're also generating benefits with fuel and labour savings."

Number Of Platforms

The technology is available on a number of platforms, including Android, which Karlinsky says is the trend with most of Descartes' customers. "It's rugged enough and at a reasonable price point.

"The key to this story and to this space is most people don't have the ability to deal with things in real time, regardless of whether or not they track drivers. Given that advanced route planning and mobile solutions are available in cloud-based deployment models,

cost is not a barrier to use of this technology, even for small- to medium-sized companies. Depending on the requirements, a routing system can be installed in a traditional desktop environment or implemented as a user-friendly web-based solution to minimize in-house IT management and upfront capital. For companies with multiple divisions and locations, these options allow for one route planning and mobile systems to support all locations while accommodating differences in operating processes.

"This software is never going to replace the human factor. You're still going to need somebody that is the conductor of the orchestra that manages this tool. However, there's only so much information any one person can handle and there's only so much math one person can do in their head versus a computer. That's what we're doing here.

"If a retailer wants to grow in terms of size and scale without adding a linear number of dispatchers and allocators, and wants to be able to increase the consistency of their DIFOT (delivered in-full, on-time) metric, they're going to need a piece of technology like this."

Descartes has offices across North America, with its head office located in Waterloo, ON. ♦

Atlas Polar
QUALITY
EDGE

 **MOFFETT**

MOVE

**It's a challenge for some truck-mounted
forklifts... for us, it's just part of the job**

MOFFETT TRUCK-MOUNTED
FORKLIFTS PROVEN TO
OUTPERFORM AND OUTLAST
ANYTHING ON THE MARKET.



Atlas Polar
IT'S ALL ABOUT QUALITY™

1.888.799.4422

Find the Moffett Forklift that's right for your job
at www.atlaspolar.com