

FleetOwner

Planning reality

Dec 3, 2015 **Brian Straight** | *Fleet Owner*



Company: Edward Don & Co., Chicago, IL

Operation: Family-owned national food service equipment and supplies distributor operating 100 trucks with 98 drivers out of six full-service distribution centers and one cross-dock facility in Florida

Problem:

Edward Don & Co. has been a long-time user of Descartes software solutions for its distribution business. Going as far back as 2004, the Chicago-based fleet was using Descartes to improve its driver's daily commutes.

The company's drivers, operating mostly 24-ft. box trucks, were making up to 16 stops per day, delivering "everything but the food" to independent restaurants, national chains, health care, hospitality, country clubs, schools and universities, government institutions, and foodservice management.

Tom Wydra, corporate fleet manager, joined the company in 2003 and remembers those early days. “When I started with the company, we routed [trucks] from four different locations, and they were stand-alone systems,” he says. Changes were made, including moving the Descartes routing process onto a single server. But something was still missing.

“We’ve used Descartes for about 20 years, but we weren’t using the system to its full advantage,” Wydra says. Centralizing the routing process provided benefits to the tune of over \$100,000 per year in savings by eliminating wasted miles, reducing fuel and overtime expense. Still, there were more efficiencies to be had.

Solution:

The recent switch to the Descartes Route Planner On Demand solution has allowed Edward Don & Co. to unlock benefits previously unavailable, Wydra says.

The cloud-based Route Planner On Demand allows users to transfer data into the Descartes solution via any browser. It also provides route optimization, dispatch management, order notifications and confirmations, real-time tracking and data capture, and historical reporting.

“It gives us better insight into plan vs. actual [routes]; it gives us insight into what dispatchers are routing,” Wydra notes. “We feel our drivers are professional, but they can alter routes if they feel it necessary” due to traffic or other delivery vehicles causing delays, for instance.

With Route Planner, the company’s transportation managers can review the routes with the drivers at the end of the day to determine why that driver altered the route.

Also, the solution provides stop-by-stop notifications on a driver’s company phone. When a delivery is skipped for any reason, the system automatically updates that route.

Edward Don prides itself on doing more than just dropping off packages. The company strives to go the extra mile by making deliveries on time and placing packages where the customer wants them, whether that’s in a storeroom, just inside the door, or to a second floor office. That can sometimes cause unanticipated delays.

“Drivers punch in when they’ve arrived, when they’ve delivered, and when they leave,” Wydra says. “This system tells us when a driver is going to be late.” If that happens, the

solution makes it easy for dispatchers to assign a new driver to assist “because the driver gets the route on their phone, so they [get the new route].”

Real-time routing, though, is just one benefit of the Route Planner On Demand solution. Wydra says the company has increased its cube capacity 21%, reduced driver hours due to more efficient routing, and increased the number of stops a typical driver makes in a day from 16 to 20.

“We’re using basically the same number of drivers we were using 10 years ago, but we are handling about 22% more volume,” Wydra says.