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Fleets Online: Delivery “pain points”

Aaron Marsh | Fleet Owner

Apr 7, 2016

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Company: Sears Holdings Corp., Hoffman Estates, IL

Operation: One of the largest national retailers with more than 1,700 Sears, Kmart and subsidiary stores across the country; owns and markets a number of brands of clothing, home goods, automotive parts and supplies, and other products

PROBLEM

Sears Holdings stores and brands enjoy quite an established presence dating back decades in the U.S., but the company found its routing and delivery system was outdated. It was a legacy system developed in-house that lacked some key functionality needed to home in on home delivery improvements.

The system didn't allow for map updates and also required routes to be planned and inputted as a “batch job.” Dispatch and planning personnel would take each day's orders and develop corresponding delivery routes that had to be locked in every evening.

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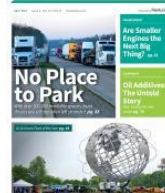
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The company also needed a better way to manage and track capacity and availability across its fleet, including accurate information on truck locations and the ability to adjust routes as necessary.

SOLUTION

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Sears’ legacy routing system may not have allowed the fleet visibility and planning flexibility needed to keep pace with the most competitive retail networks today, but the company also considered what had to improve from another angle: the customer’s.

“We actually conducted a focus group with our members to understand their pain points,” says Kris Eyunni, vice president of supply chain for home delivery and distribution at Sears Holdings. That effort identified a common complaint.

“When you ask a member what the biggest pain point is when it comes to final-mile delivery, the answer is often the same,” Eyunni notes. “Where is my delivery driver?”

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The company deployed the Route Planner and MobileLink mobile workforce management products from fleet technology provider Descartes. The routing software is designed to enhance fleet capacity utilization, improve on-time performance, and allow flexibility in planning for things like order changes and cancellations or rerouting for same-day delivery, according to Descartes.

Bill Hutchinson, senior vice president of supply chain at Sears Holdings, notes that it took about six months to deploy the technology at 106 delivery hubs. “We chose Descartes at Sears because of the need for our customers to have very accurate promises as to when they get their deliveries and our need to drive efficiency in our network,” he says.

The cloud-based routing software allows Sears to chart and make on-the-fly adjustments to tweak routes and get more precise delivery information to clients—a big part of addressing customers’ pain points, especially given the nature of many items being delivered.

“Because we’re working with a live, real-time system, we’re actually able to make adjustments and see those reflected in the routes right away,” contends Christina Gross, manager of Sears’ Sacramento routing office. “We can adjust for circumstances like weather, change dock departs, follow those responses, and have the routes update immediately,” she adds.

The Descartes product also has increased fleet efficiency. “It allows us to manage our capacity in each [truck] a lot better and a lot more precisely,” according to Joe Marco, director of logistics and planning at Sears.

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