

Border States Takes Last-Mile Delivery Performance and the Customer Experience to the Next Level



Border States, the sixth-largest electrical distributor in the US, is reshaping its operational landscape through Descartes' advanced route planning, dispatch, and execution solution. This strategic shift is propelling efficiency, providing delivery visibility, and enhancing the overall customer experience. All of which are integral to maintaining a competitive edge in an industry where precision, speed, and agility matter.

"It's not until you take a fresh view of the process that you can truly improve. Descartes can help build that view."

Dustin Stedman
Transportation Specialist
Border States

Company Profile

Border States
Electrical Distribution

Descartes Solution

Route Planning, Execution & Mobile

About the Client

Border States, the sixth-largest electrical distributor in the U.S., spans over 120 locations across 29 states. From tools and nuts to gas pipes and industrial transformers, they deliver diverse products in rural and metropolitan areas.

Quick Overview

Challenge

Inefficient Manual Routing, Lack of Visibility, Inaccurate ETAs

Solution

Optimized Planning and Mobile Proof of Delivery

Results

- Easy to Build Efficient Routes
- Increased Customer Satisfaction
- Reduced Delivery Claims
- Ability to Identify Productivity Improvement Opportunities

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Challenge: Manual Planning Hinders Visibility and Constrains Delivery Performance

In its pursuit of transformation, Border States identified the need to replace manual routing processes with a more sophisticated approach. Operating in over 120 locations across 29 states with 500 vehicles, the complexity of the operation was tangible. Delivering diverse products—from small nuts and bolts to large industrial transformers—often to unattended job sites, added another layer of complexity.

Before Descartes, the company struggled to generate optimal delivery routes. The lack of visibility into ETAs, driver progress, and the true costs of each delivery hindered their efficiency. Moreover, there was a desire to capture and store proof-of-delivery (POD) information seamlessly, addressing customer claims without disrupting drivers or warehouse staff.

Solution: Optimized Route Planning Provides a 'Fresh View' for Transformation

After evaluating seven software vendors, Border States selected Descartes in large part for its user-friendly interface design and accessibility.

"The system looks clean and is very easy to use," noted Dustin Stedman, the company's transportation specialist. Descartes' comprehensive solution simplifies route planning and dispatch, real-time progress monitoring, and the capture of essential POD information electronically. The platform optimizes delivery routes, addressing customer service and operational efficiency while accommodating dynamic and static routing processes.

"The optimizer makes it very easy to identify inefficiencies in our routes," Stedman emphasized. "Using the solution, we can build better routes more easily." By utilizing Descartes' mobile solution to capture delivery photos, Border States has reduced customer claims, providing a quick and efficient reference for deliveries made. The solution also facilitates the identification of wasted time, such as excessive stops at gas stations, and bolstered customer service with accurate ETAs.

Stedman underscores Descartes' crucial role in ensuring a successful implementation and ongoing positive results. "Descartes has been very helpful in working with us on product tweaks and enhancements. The system is very customizable, and they have been there every step of the way to help fit the system to our needs."

Looking ahead, Border States envisions a deeper integration of Descartes' solution with its enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. This strategic move aims to streamline backend processes, laying a robust foundation for sustained growth.

Reflecting on their transformative journey, Stedman encourages other businesses to reassess their routing practices and consider investing in a robust tool. "It's not until you take a fresh view of the process that you can truly improve. Descartes can help build that view," he said.

Results:



Continuous Improvement

Real-time visibility enables the company to see where drivers and vehicles are, identifying time wasted during route execution.



Improved Customer Experience

With real-time visibility, Border States can provide customers with accurate ETAs, thereby increasing delivery satisfaction.



Electronic Proof of Delivery

Less time is spent refuting customer delivery claims and redelivering products thanks to photographic evidence of deliveries.



Efficient & Profitable Routes

By factoring multiple routes and assets, constraints, and order patterns, optimized planning makes it possible to build better routes that increase vehicle utilization.