

Why Food Distributors Need Smart Scheduling

Give Customers More Options While Maximising Delivery Efficiency



Distribution Challenges Require a Different Approach

Today's tough environment is challenging food distributors' approaches to scheduling customer deliveries. Shrinking margins and increasing customer expectations mean that the traditional brute force approaches to scheduling delivery appointments must change.

Food distributors need to enable their sales forces to give potential customers service-day options quickly and accurately and for existing customers to give them greater control of scheduling off-day orders but do both in a way that reduces delivery costs. The smart scheduling concept can accomplish both.

The Service-Day Assignment Challenge Food Distributors Face

Service-day assignment is one of the most critical elements of capturing new customers. Service-day assignment has been a challenge as the sales team wants to be as fast and flexible as possible to close a new customer.

However, when the sales team is with the customer they do not necessarily know if there may or may not be capacity to deliver reliably. The risk to the business is that the new appointment inadvertently overloads delivery operations, which leads to poor delivery performance and the loss of a recently hard-won customer.

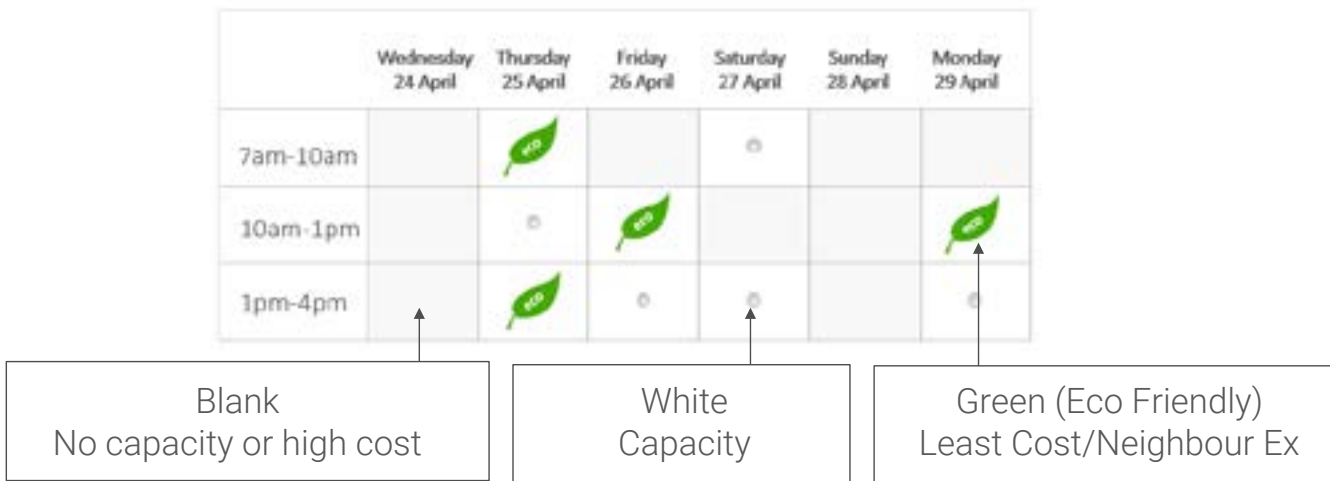
As a result, distributors find themselves in a quandary. Do they take whatever service day the customer and sales agree to in the sales call and face the consequences? Or do they tell the customer that time is required to ensure that service day option is available and possibly lose the sale to a faster moving competitor?



Smart scheduling supports hybrid routes which allow food service distributors to use fixed delivery windows with their top customers.

What is Smart Scheduling?

Smart scheduling provides service-day assignment options in real time that are scored so distributors can determine which options they want to present to customers. The service-day assignment options are unique to the customer and order, consider existing orders, delivery capacity, road networks and other constraints to ensure that a delivery option can be executed.



Because the options are scored, distributors can determine which ones are presented to potential customers, reducing delivery costs and improving margins. With smart scheduling, distributors can use fast, cost effective and service-day assignment options to capture the customer today and keep them in the future.

Smart scheduling supports hybrid routes which allow food service distributors to use fixed delivery windows with their top customers and dynamically schedule the lower priority customers to maximise route productivity and customer service.

Smart scheduling eliminates the need for unwieldy and inefficient master routes that contain every customer even when only a percentage of them will be served on a given day. It's also an invaluable way to blend off-day orders with scheduled ones.

Smart scheduling allows distributors to take the guess work out of service day assignment scheduling and better control costs. There is no more guessing on capacity and because it knows what orders already exist it can recommend and enforce appointment scheduling options that are lowest cost.

The approach keeps the sale team from unintentionally driving up delivery costs because of lumpy delivery demand and constraining the service-day options they can present to maximise delivery density.



Smart scheduling allows commingling of scheduled and off-day orders to maximise capacity utilisation, lower costs, and be more responsive to customers.



Better Flexibility and Cost Management of Off-Day Orders

Customer demand is more variable than ever before and distributors need to be more agile to service off-day orders to keep customers. Off-day orders can be expensive to execute, are not typically executed by the normal delivery fleet, and many times require additional vehicles that are underutilised. From a customer experience perspective, they can be frustrating because they are not time definite.

Smart scheduling allows commingling of scheduled and off-day orders to maximise capacity utilisation, lower costs, and be more responsive to customers. Smart scheduling knows where open capacity in the fleet exists and determines the most cost-effective options.

By leveraging the delivery fleet, distributors can be more reactive to off-order demands and provide delivery windows that improve the customer experience. Only when capacity is exceeded or it's not cost effective to use the existing delivery fleet, will smart scheduling use additional vehicles for expedited deliveries. Smart scheduling can also be employed as a customer self-service, allowing customers to book deliveries on demand, but keep distributors in control by offering the most cost-effective delivery options.

Put Ordering in the Hands of Customers, But Control Delivery Expectations and Costs

Food distribution customers want flexibility and food distributors can use smart scheduling to give them better access to available delivery windows, but know they are achievable. It also helps customers know if delivery capacity is available by presenting delivery calendar options and encourages them to order earlier to ensure they get the time windows they want.



With smart scheduling, customers get greater ordering flexibility and more reliable delivery and distributors get greater control of how they schedule deliveries and their profit margins.



Conclusion

Smart scheduling simultaneously solves two of the greatest challenges for food distributors: providing fast and accurate service-day assignments while sales have prospects engaged and presenting delivery options that allows distributors to maximise delivery efficiency.

By applying the same concepts to off-orders, smart scheduling allows distributors to be more reactive to off orders but minimise costs by intelligently leveraging the delivery fleet's open capacity and minimise the use of expensive expediting services. With smart scheduling, customers get greater ordering flexibility and more reliable delivery and distributors get greater control of how they schedule deliveries and their profit margins.

To learn how Descartes can help food distributors smart schedule their deliveries, visit our [website](#).

About Descartes Systems Group

Descartes (Nasdaq:DSGX) (TSX:DSG) is the global leader in providing on-demand, software-as-a-service solutions focused on improving the productivity, security and sustainability of logistics-intensive businesses. Customers use our modular, software-as-a-service solutions to route, track and help improve the safety, performance and compliance of delivery resources; plan, allocate and execute shipments; rate, audit and pay transportation invoices; access global trade data; file customs and security documents for imports and exports; and complete numerous other logistics processes by participating in the world's largest, collaborative multimodal logistics community. Our headquarters are in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and we have offices and partners around the world.

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