

"It tracks the driver with GPS and holds them accountable for their time, as well as helping with their route planning."

Every driver receives a route plan with a specific estimated arrival time. Roszko explains, "We don't offer real-time traffic feeds, but we configure vehicle speeds, so if the vehicle is going downtown during a high traffic time, we'll slow down that profile."

Descartes' online service has a set-up fee of approximately \$5,000. After that, there is a subscription rate based on volume for every stop the company tracks.

Acting as a "Big Brother" tool is just one of the functions of this technology. Route planning is another major tool.

Say, for example, you have 20 trucks on the road and 300 customers waiting for their products. "Descartes provides an efficient way to build your routes and maximize the amount of product on the trucks," Roszko says. "With the mobile application there are real-time updates into the website, which enables your dispatch and customer service staff to see exactly what's going on in the field."

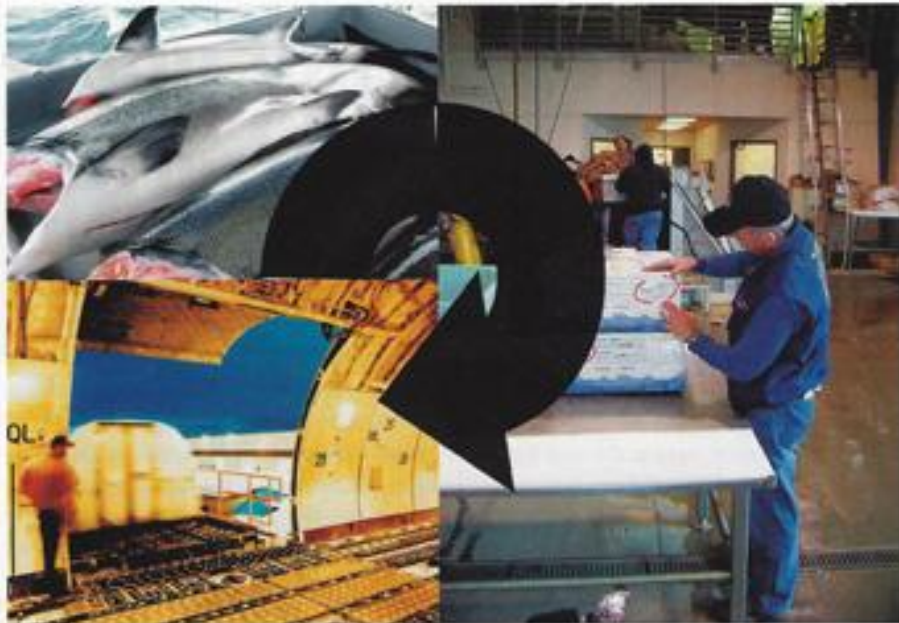
If a customer calls in, you can tell them exactly what time you'll be there and inform them of any delays. Grocery Gateway is one happy customer, having improved its on-time delivery by 14 per cent since deploying Descartes' solution. "We get improved operational metrics, so we save money, and we can guarantee on-time delivery which makes the consumer happy," says Stephen Tallevi, general manager.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

Transportation delays can have devastating effects on perishable shipments and cost millions of dollars if product is damaged or contaminated. That's where Luciano Morra steps in. He worked at Federal Express for 12 years before starting PeriShip, a logistics provider to the perishable foods industry. His firm acts as middle-man between the customer and FedEx, providing personalized customer service on shipments.

That service includes weather monitoring, nightly pre-alerts to major FedEx sorting locations on all shipments, tracking analysis, intervention (when required) to correct any issues that develop in transit and personalized customer email updates on the status of all shipments.

"Today, for example, we had a shipment on a flight coming from Seattle that was delayed, which meant the shipment didn't make a connecting flight," Morra says. "First we focused on



protecting the product, getting it into refrigeration. Then, my supply chain coordinators placed the shipment on another flight and organized pick up and delivery at the other end to ensure it was delivered on time. This all happened so seamlessly that the customer didn't even know the box was delayed."

While FedEx captures real-time information on the millions of packages moving through its system, they cannot offer the kind of attention and oversight that perishable shipments require, says Ray Garrison, chief information officer at PeriShip.

"We understand the demanding requirements of the perishable foods industry and in FedEx we have an information resource that enables us not only to monitor each and every PeriShip shipment moving through the FedEx system, but to take proactive steps towards issue resolution."

PeriShip relies on FedEx's tracking technology to provide the visibility demanded by its perishable shippers. These solutions also provide the company's supply chain partners and logistic experts with up-to-the-minute information.

"Our servers, using software applications that have been certified by FedEx, are in constant contact with the FedEx servers, 24/7," Garrison says. "Every five minutes, our system updates the status of every shipment we are monitoring. FedEx provides the time, location and status of each package, and the PeriShip servers take this information, summarize it and present it to our staff of logistics experts, who review and evaluate it."

"No matter how intelligent a computer

algorithm might be, it takes a person with years of experience and an intimate knowledge of the express shipping environment to recognize a situation that requires action. Robert George, owner of Las-Vegas based company The Crab Broker, has been a big fan of PeriShip since his relationship with DHL broke down two years ago. His company, which supplies in excess of 50 boxes of fresh seafood a day to upscale retailers in the U.S. and Whole Foods in Vancouver, was left in a quandary when DHL went through a transformation and for two weeks, could not ship product in a sufficiently timely manner.

"At 8 a.m. one morning, I called PeriShip and told Luciano, 'I have \$10,000 worth of seafood that has to be shipped today,'" says George. "Within two hours, he took care of everything. With a minute's notice, PeriShip did a perfect job, so I just stayed with them." George's shipments require overnight delivery to some 150 cities and cost between \$30,000 and \$40,000 a month for transportation.

"If the product doesn't get delivered on time, it doesn't matter how great my seafood is," he says. "I can control just about everything except the delivery of the product, and with PeriShip, they take control of that."

Technologies offered by ScoringSystems, Descartes and PeriShip each provide a different yet important role in the industry. But it's clear that while technology helps, it can never replace the importance of having a live team to evaluate data and communicate delays or formulate an effective Plan B, where necessary, in the movement of food from farm to fork. **GT**