

# Mapping Technology

By Nick Stenz and Bryan Trilli

**A**re you too busy to re-route? Want to know if your drivers are waving as they pass each other on their routes? Do new drivers keep getting lost and have trouble finding stops when regulars call in sick? Are gas prices skyrocketing in your market? Are your service technicians driving all over your region without regard to location or driving distance between stops? Mapping technology can be the solution your business needs to save time, money and unnecessary frustration.

## What is mapping?

Mapping is a component for water dealer software that allows you to simply, quickly and efficiently route all deliveries, service and sales. Your customer list will be automatically resolved to latitude and longitude coordinates based upon each service address. If there is no physical address or the customer is on a new road, you can simply pull up a map and manually tell the software where that customer is located. The mapping system you select should be capable of becoming completely integrated into your software. Exporting and importing data back and forth is too cumbersome and inefficient to encourage daily route optimization. Integration allows you to access powerful functionality such as viewing the customer's balance, adding a reminder to call the customer, or scheduling another service call, all while view-

ing that customer in your mapping program.

This mapping system should also be completely integrated with your call management system (See *Tech Talk: Call Center Workflow Software*, WC&P Nov. 2004). In addition, it should be directly attached to your 'paperless office' system, if your software employs this technology, so that you can quickly and easily reference sales quotes, contracts and past service call documents without jumping to a different screen or different area of your software.

The best mapping technology is designed to help you re-route all of your

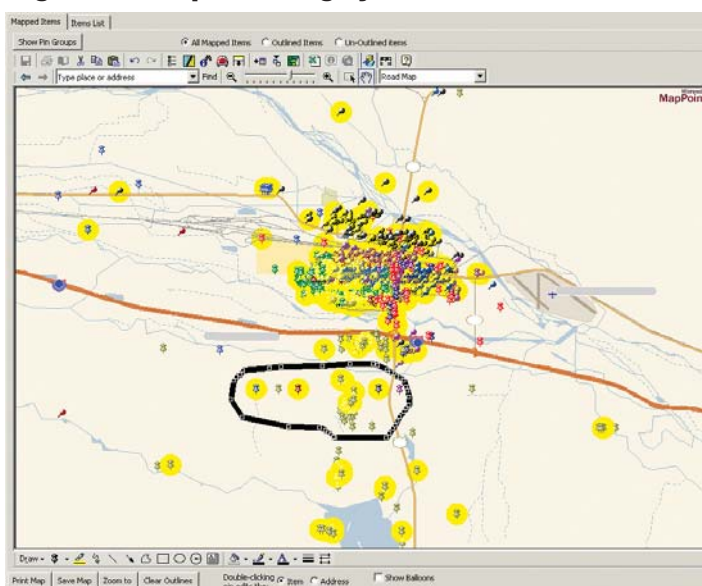
should then be able to re-route daily as needed. Yes, you read that correctly. Every single day your routes are changing because of call-ins, cancellations, road construction or customer availability. Because of this, your software should be able to provide these same dynamic benefits by optimizing your deliveries. Make sure your software can do the same thing for your service and sales department as well.

## How does mapping help me?

Your software pulls up a graphical representation of your routes and shows the average or total number of stops for each so you can instantly compare the 'balance' of all your routes. Then you can pull up a map that color-codes all of your stops by route number, driver, product, zip code, water hardness, etc. The color-coding makes it very easy to see which routes are overlapping. You should then be able to circle a series of stops grouped together in an area and assign them all to a different driver and/or route at once. Re-routing, which used to be avoided like the plague because it took months, now takes hours. It can save your dealership thousands of dollars in terms of gas, driver time, vehicle wear, etc. Your routing system may look similar to Figure 1 as you are performing your re-routing.

Once you have everyone re-routed

**Figure 1. Sample routing system**



delivery routes in a matter of hours instead of months. Once you have re-routed according to geographic area, you

so that drivers and routes are not overlapping, you will want to optimize each route to put all the stops in the best order. Good software will optimize the route for you automatically, and more importantly, re-optimize the route every day.

Don't forget to print out a set of turn-by-turn directions for your drivers (including an overview map). Then print out your product tickets and product ticket list or send tickets to your handhelds in the most efficient order for the day. With your directions, the software may even give you an estimate for the total distance traveled and expected route time once you fill in an average stop time. Armed with that information, you can easily see how much more efficient your new routes will be or how the routes may change when dealing with construction, cancellations, will-calls or other route modifiers.

### **What about my service and sales departments?**

Generally your delivery routes have the most stops and will be much easier to optimize with software compared with manually optimizing. However, your sales people and service technicians are

covering the same geographic area and are probably doing so with your vehicle while you pay for gas.

Obviously there are times when customers or prospects must be scheduled at a specific time for service or a sales demonstration and those times necessarily dictate the route you will travel. There are other instances, such as when you are scheduling next month's filter changes for your rental base, when you have much more flexibility to schedule work in a particular region. Simply pull up a list of next month's filter changes, map them and target a specific area for a given day. If you have a lot of home owned units, you may do this a bit differently. You may first send out a postcard announcing your customer's pending filter change and you will have a rough idea of when you will be in a particular region once you get your first few responses. When customers call in requesting a filter change you can pull up your software's scheduling system to view the next two weeks of work, send that to a map color-coded by date and instantly inform the customer when you will be servicing their region. Keep in mind that this scheduling system should not be limited to simply filter changes, but should

allow you to view the work of your entire service, sales or delivery departments.

Your sales department may also benefit from mapping technology. Let's assume you are sitting on a stack of leads you received from a recent home show, a local fair or from your web site. Why not display those leads on a map along with any other prospects in your system or current customers you would like to upgrade? You can circle and assign the leads to the desired sales person and attempt to schedule the leads in a given region for the same day or week. You'll save time and money and your sales people will perform more demonstrations and make more sales.

If you cannot schedule or have much difficulty scheduling appointments while you are in a region, you may at least want to reference your ever-growing prospect list to decide which doors to knock on if you have a few extra minutes before or after performing a demonstration. Additionally, when sending out sales personnel to target businesses in your area, you can simply input the businesses as prospects, map all the prospects, circle a group in a certain area, optimize the sales route and print out turn-by-turn instructions. The software will even give you an estimate for travel distance and the total time it should take after you input an estimated average stop time.

### **Conclusion**

A completely integrated mapping module for your receivables software can help your sales, service and delivery departments save time and money while allowing your employees to get more work done. With gas prices on the rise, mapping technology may be the best way to cut your expenses and help ensure your company's profitability.

### **About the author**

◆ Nick Stenz is a systems engineer and Bryan Trilli is a systems specialist supporting Watertight® workflow management software at KDS Moses Inc. Watertight® seamlessly integrates call management, accounting, collections, delivery/service scheduling and route mapping, handheld delivery computers, point of sale and paperless document management into one system. They can be contacted at KDS Moses Inc., P.O. Box 220, Cascade, WI 53011; Phone: (800) 676-6109; Fax: (920) 994-4692; E-mail: [nstenz@kdsmoses.com](mailto:nstenz@kdsmoses.com) or [btrilli@kdsmoses.com](mailto:btrilli@kdsmoses.com); or through their web site: [www.kdsmoses.com](http://www.kdsmoses.com).