Four examples of how big data is crucial for the delivery sector

Data is everywhere: for individuals and for organisations large and small, there has never been so much data around, but understanding how to extract value from data can be transformational.

Here are 3 examples of how data can be used in the delivery industry to create efficiency, improve service, and generate revenue.

Drive speed and accuracy
Speed and accuracy are two sides of the same coin and strategic to satisfy consumer expectations. This is particularly important for food delivery companies: if a hungry customer is seduced by wonderful photos of flavourful meals, an order will be immediately placed and unless sushi was ordered, it's better not food cold.

So what? You might think… your drivers know their routes, after all. But if there is an unexpected road closure, or an accident, or congestion, or flooding, or long-term road construction? Combining data about the weather, traffic conditions, and GPS information can mean the difference between the warm glow of a happy customer and cold comfort.

Access to this kind of real-time, data-driven decision-making is just as relevant in longer-distance non-food delivery. What about all the experience and notions stored in the drivers' minds? That is one of the more precious and most often lost data in the sector. As soon as the driver changes route or company, his employer loses hard-won knowledge. This data can be digitized too if your platform is smart enough to ask drivers for their notes and store them for future deliveries at the same location.

Ensure efficiency
Since the earliest days of the technology industry, one thing has been promised more often than anything else – efficiency. That hasn't always been true. But where data analytics are concerned, it is a realistic outcome.

Most people in business understand that knowing your customers is important. What are their needs, their challenges, their goals, and how can you help them with those things? Data will feed a business everything they need to know about customers.

Data will also show a business how well it is using its resources. How much fuel is being used, for example. How much distance each vehicle travels or how long each type of delivery takes. Data can help you track everything you spend and just as importantly how much you waste. By tracking waste and identifying the cause of waste, it is possible to make savings.

Look for criticalities
The retail logistics sector is saturated with service providers that can pick, pack, shift and ship a mind-boggling array of products from just about anywhere to just about anywhere else. Next-day delivery is easy. Same-day is increasingly common. Time-slots and tracking information are almost ubiquitous.

Data will enable you to measure your business outputs and outcomes to ascertain how consistent your operations are. Is everything shipping on time and being delivered within an acceptable window? If not, are there patterns within your data that can show you where the problem is? It might be one warehouse that is the problem. So: find out what's going on. Who knows, maybe it's as simple as a road closure creating congestion. Or maybe it is something more pernicious. Whatever it is, the answer will be waiting for you in the data.

Improve customer experience
By aligning operational service levels with marketing, data can help manage customer expectations, taking into consideration optimized delivery costs and times. Moreover, the ability to forecast driving times, taking into consideration past experiences, ensures a real customer-driven last mile.

The ability to make accurate predictions is key to businesses operating in a market with many variables, such as the retail logistics sector, bringing a priceless competitive advantage. Any company looking to thrive during the ongoing e-commerce boom has to realize that logistics, and especially last-mile, is no more a separate entity, it is the new reta