

# Atlanta Retailers Association Optimizes Member Engagement

## Business Services Route Optimization



### ARA Empowers Field Teams To Serve 1,500 Members

The Atlanta Retailers Association (ARA) needed a better way to plan routes for its development managers to visit with the group's 1,500 convenience store members across Georgia every quarter. Manually coordinating these visits was time-consuming and led to missed visits and inconsistent member engagement. To overcome these challenges, ARA implemented a last mile transportation platform from Route4Me to optimize route planning and ensure the TDM team meets their goal for member visits.

"We now have a structured, reliable planning process that ensures our TDMs visit all our members on time, every quarter," says Glen Thomas, Vendor Relations & Operations Manager at the Association. "Route4Me has been a game-changer in organizing our territories and improving accountability."

### Route Planning Process Lacked Standardization

ARA is a cooperative buying group based in Atlanta but with members throughout the state of Georgia. The association's six Territory Development Managers (TDMs) have a goal to visit every member each quarter to conduct surveys, ensure compliance with vendor agreements and identify new revenue opportunities for store owners.

However, in the past ARA's routing process lacked standardization, and the association had little visibility into its field operations. TDMs created their own schedules, making it difficult to track completed visits and sometimes resulting in incomplete surveys or missed opportunities to support members.

The association also had no defined territories for its TDMs, leading to inconsistent visit frequencies and unvisited members at the end of a quarter. And because the managers planned their own routes, the ARA had no way to validate how far the TDMs had driven in a week when it came time to reimburse mileage.

- ✓ Reduced missed quarterly store visits from 13% to near zero
- ✓ Positioned Association to double member visits from 1,500 to 3,000 per quarter
- ✓ Minimized unnecessary travel, reducing mileage costs and maximizing time spent face-to-face with members
- ✓ Delivered real-time visibility into field operations, strengthening team oversight and accountability

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**Glen Thomas**

Vendor Relations & Operations Manager  
Atlanta Retailers Association



## Association Defines Territories, Increases Accountability

Thomas tackled these inefficiencies by establishing structured territories and assigning TDMs to specific geographic zones using the territory management capabilities in the Route4Me platform. As he plans a week's routes, Thomas sets business rules so that the TDMs visit eight assigned stores within their territory each day, with two additional daily stops at non-member stores for prospecting. The optimization engine accounts for the travel time between stores and a service time of 45 minutes per visit to ensure that the managers can complete their daily route within a single workday.

"With Route4Me, we now have clearly defined territories, and our TDMs are accountable for their areas. In Q1, we hit our goal of visiting every one of our members ahead of schedule, allowing us to increase our focus on business development," says Thomas. He adds that the ability to assign TDMs to specific territories has strengthened the Association's relationships with its members, since the development managers see the same owners repeatedly throughout the year.

## Keeping Costs In Check With Optimized Routes

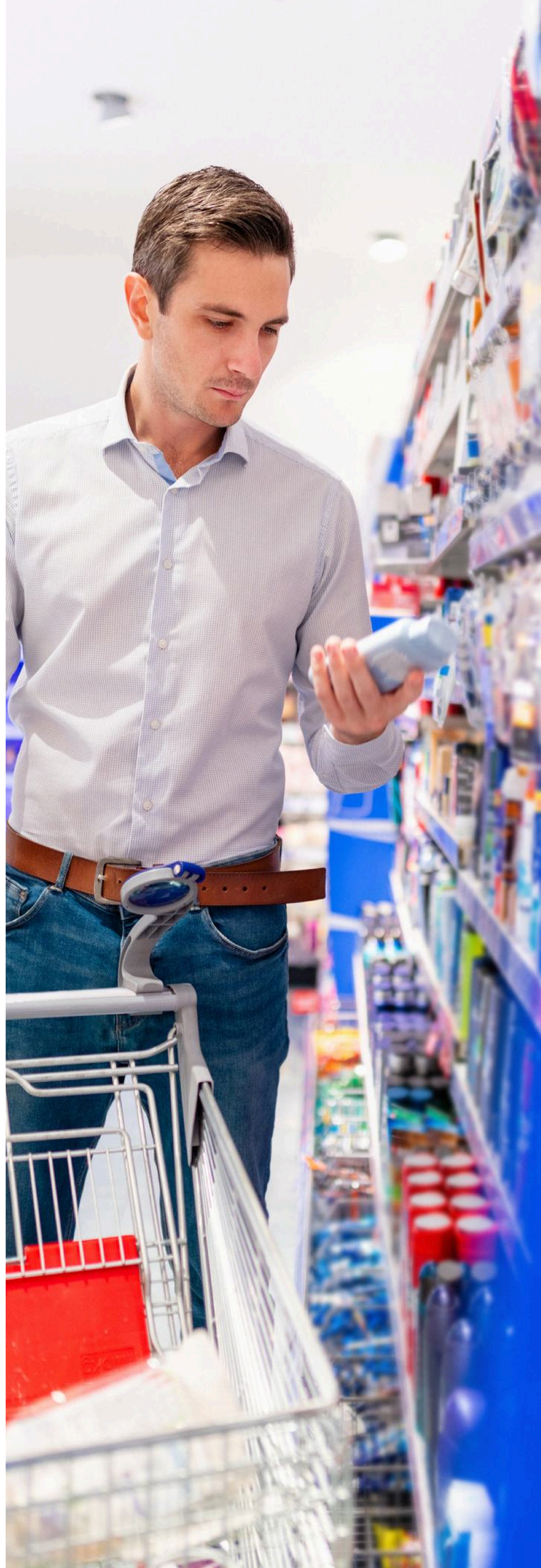
Efficiency was another major concern for ARA, in terms of both travel time and fuel costs. Without optimized routing, TDMs often spent excessive time behind the wheel between member stores, which inflated mileage and reduced the number of visits per day. Now Thomas optimizes the daily routes to minimize unnecessary travel, ensuring that TDMs maximize their time in stores, face-to-face with members, rather than on the road.

"We pay our TDMs based on mileage. With Route4Me, we are able to control costs by planning more efficient routes. We can validate that the TDMs' reported mileage aligns with the planned routes, preventing discrepancies and keeping expenses in check," explains Thomas.

## Sticking To The Plan With Real-Time Visibility

Thomas monitors routes as TDMs check off completed stops in Route4Me's mobile app, providing real-time visibility into the managers' activity. "We can track their progress and ensure that we're meeting our overall goals so we stay on plan," he explains.

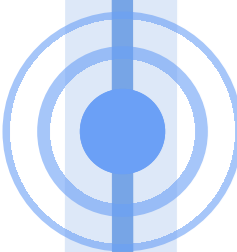
Thomas also uses the reporting and dashboard features in Route4Me to track mileage and completed visits so he can provide a clear picture of field performance to ARA leadership each week.



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**Atlanta Retailers Association**



## ARA Looks to Strengthen Member Engagement

Looking to the future, ARA aims to further strengthen the development managers’ relationships with members using Route4Me’s automated notifications capabilities to alert store owners prior to visits. Thomas also believes that moving to static routes will allow his team to visit each member twice per quarter rather than once.

“Our goal is to increase member engagement and offer better service. Route4Me’s capabilities will help us scale our operations while maintaining efficiency, and we’re looking forward to taking our field operation to the next level,” concludes Thomas.

## About The Atlanta Retailers Association

Established in 1995, the Atlanta Retailers Association (ARA) supports independently owned and operated convenience stores in the greater Atlanta area. It provides professional and commercial support to its members, which include nearly one fifth of all convenience stores in the Georgia market. Its current total membership covers 70 counties across Georgia.

<https://www.araonline.us/>



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