



Beyond the Route:

**The Propane Operator's Guide
to Closing Efficiency Gaps**



A practical guide for propane delivery businesses looking to improve efficiency, reduce cost, and operate with greater control.

This eBook Includes:

- The 5 operational gaps quietly costing propane businesses time and money
- Diagnostic questions to identify where your gaps are
- A real-world case study: how Eastern Propane & Oil achieved a 7% YoY efficiency gain
- A self-assessment scorecard to benchmark your own operation

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The Routing Paradox

Propane delivery operations have invested heavily in routing technology over the past decade and it has paid off. Routes are more efficient. Planning is faster. Schedules are tighter. For most businesses, routing optimization has been one of the most meaningful operational improvements they've made.

So why do so many operators still feel like they're leaving efficiency on the table?

The answer, consistently, is the same: it's not the route. **It's everything around it.**

Delivery operations extend well beyond route planning, spanning how orders are generated, how work is executed in the field, and how performance is tracked.

And as operations grow in complexity, these surrounding areas become increasingly important to get right, and it's within these areas that gaps begin to emerge.

This guide focuses on those gaps. They show up consistently across propane operations of all sizes, from regional distributors to large multi-state businesses. They're often invisible until you know what to look for, but once you see them, they're hard to ignore.

For each gap, we'll walk through what it looks like in practice, how to tell if it's affecting your operation, and what addressing it can mean for your business.

Note

This guide is designed to be practical, not theoretical. Each chapter includes a short diagnostic section so you can assess your own operation as you read. At the end, a full self-assessment scorecard brings it all together.

Orders Don't Reflect Real-World Demand



The Challenge

When orders don't always reflect real demand, the inefficiency flows directly into route planning. Planners are building routes on top of a flawed foundation. The routing system can optimize the sequence perfectly but it can't fix an order that shouldn't have been created, or a delivery that was scheduled too early.

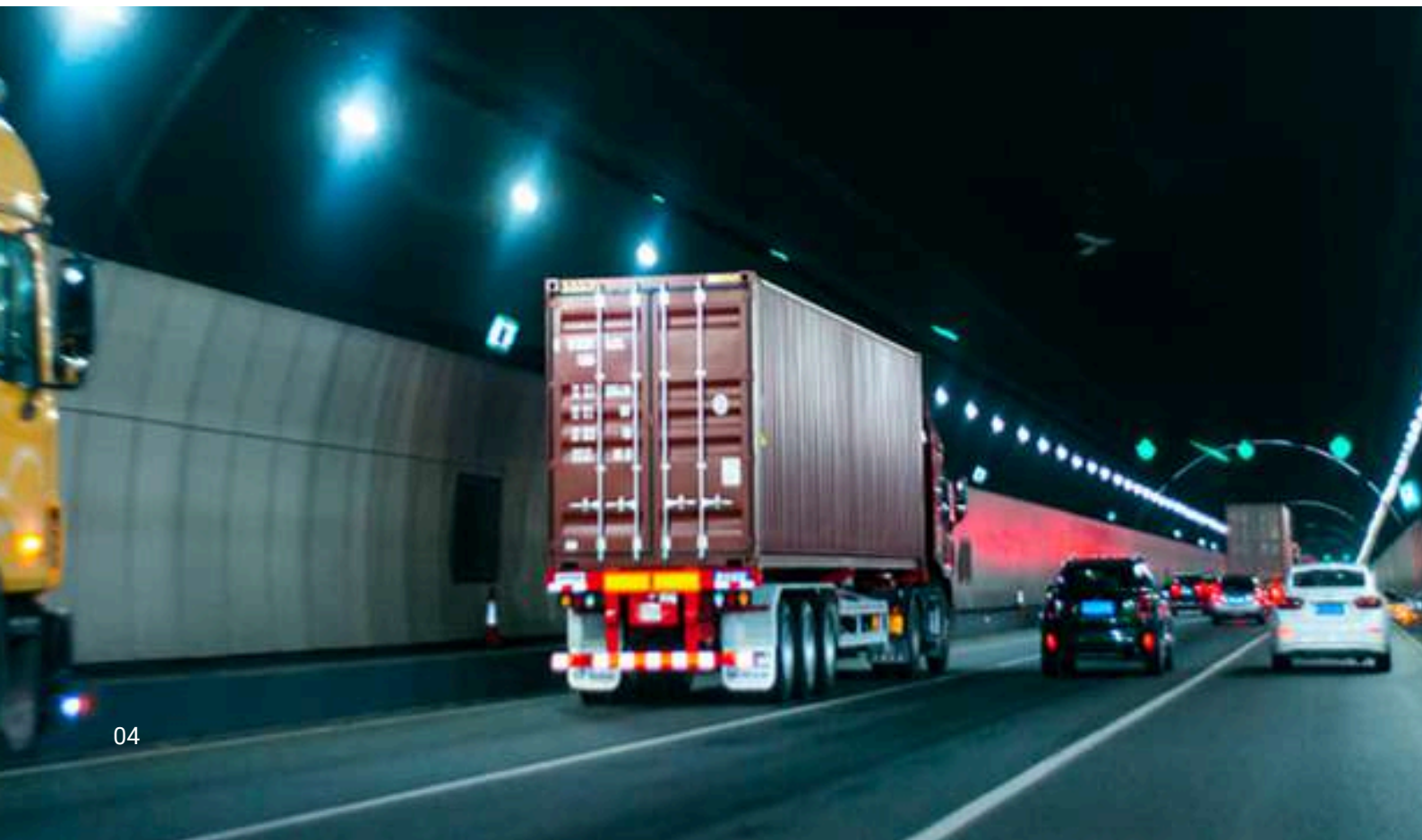
What Good Looks Like

Leading operations are solving this upstream, before the route is built. Rather than relying on fixed schedules or manual triggers, they're using demand-driven order generation: pulling in usage data, weather forecasts and history, customer consumption patterns, and other signals to generate orders that more accurately reflect how much to deliver and when. The result is a cleaner order pool feeding into route planning.

Diagnostic: Is This Gap Costing You?

Diagnostic Question	Yes	No
Are your delivery schedules primarily driven by fixed rules or calendar-based frequencies?	☐	☐
Do planners regularly need to manually adjust or cull the order pool before building routes?	☐	☐
Do you experience a meaningful number of low-fill deliveries (trucks arriving to customers who didn't need much gas or fuel)?	☐	☐
Is demand forecasting done manually or informally rather than through a system?	☐	☐
Do you struggle to adjust quickly when weather or demand patterns shift unexpectedly?	☐	☐

If you answered 'Yes' to two or more of these questions, there is likely a meaningful efficiency opportunity in how your orders are being generated.



Too Much of the Job Still Relies on Manual Input



The Challenge

The shift to mobile delivery solutions was a significant step forward for propane operations and communication between the field and the office improved.

But for many operations, the transition stopped short of its full potential. Drivers still manually enter delivery quantities. They record meter readings by hand. They complete paperwork at the end of a stop that could have been captured automatically. And that manual effort accumulates into a significant drain on time and accuracy.

What Good Looks Like

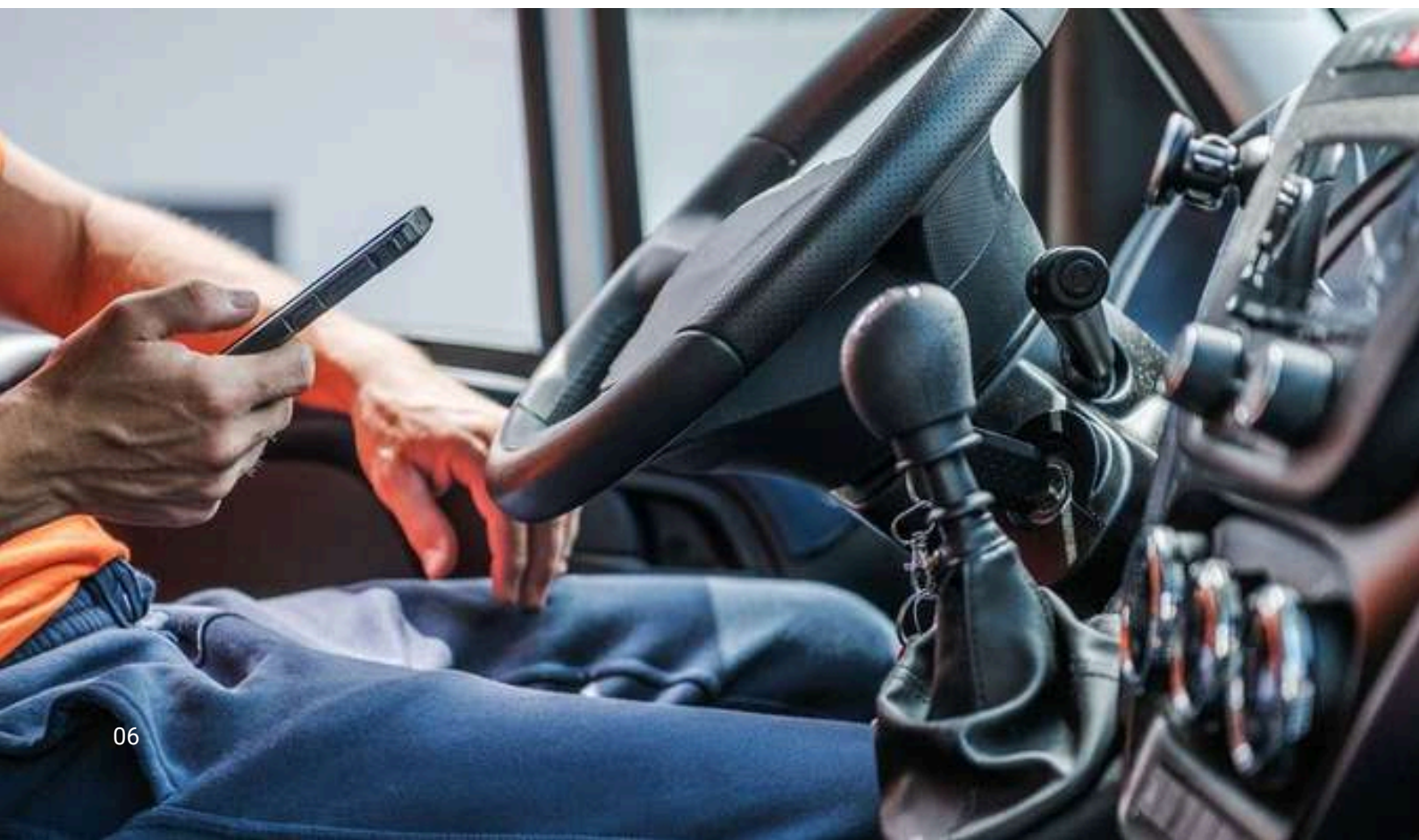
Efficient propane operations are eliminating manual input at the point of delivery by connecting their mobile applications directly to in-truck systems, such as pumps, meters, and registers. When the truck delivers, the data is captured: quantity delivered, time on site, meter readings, and any relevant compliance data.

It's not just faster, it delivers better, real-time data back to the business while improving safety by reducing driver interaction with equipment and time in and out of the cab.

Diagnostic: Is This Gap Costing You?

Diagnostic Question	Yes	No
Is there a time lag between a delivery being completed and the data appearing in your back-office system?	☐	☐
Do you experience billing errors or reconciliation issues that trace back to data entry mistakes?	☐	☐
Are compliance reports time-consuming to produce because data has to be manually compiled?	☐	☐
Do drivers spend more than a few minutes per stop on administrative tasks unrelated to the actual delivery?	☐	☐

If you answered 'Yes' to two or more of these questions, the manual data burden in your field operations is likely costing you more than you realize.



Visibility Drops Once the Day Begins



The Challenge

There's a moment every morning in a propane dispatch operation where everything is clear. Routes are built. Trucks are loaded. Drivers have their schedules. From a planning perspective, the day looks exactly as it should.

Then the trucks leave the yard. That's when visibility starts to break down. Real-time insight into what's happening in the field becomes fragmented and is dependent on driver check-ins, manual updates, and reactive communication.

The business questions that matter during the day are:

1. Is the route running on time?
2. Which stops have been completed?
3. Are there any delivery issues that need to be escalated?

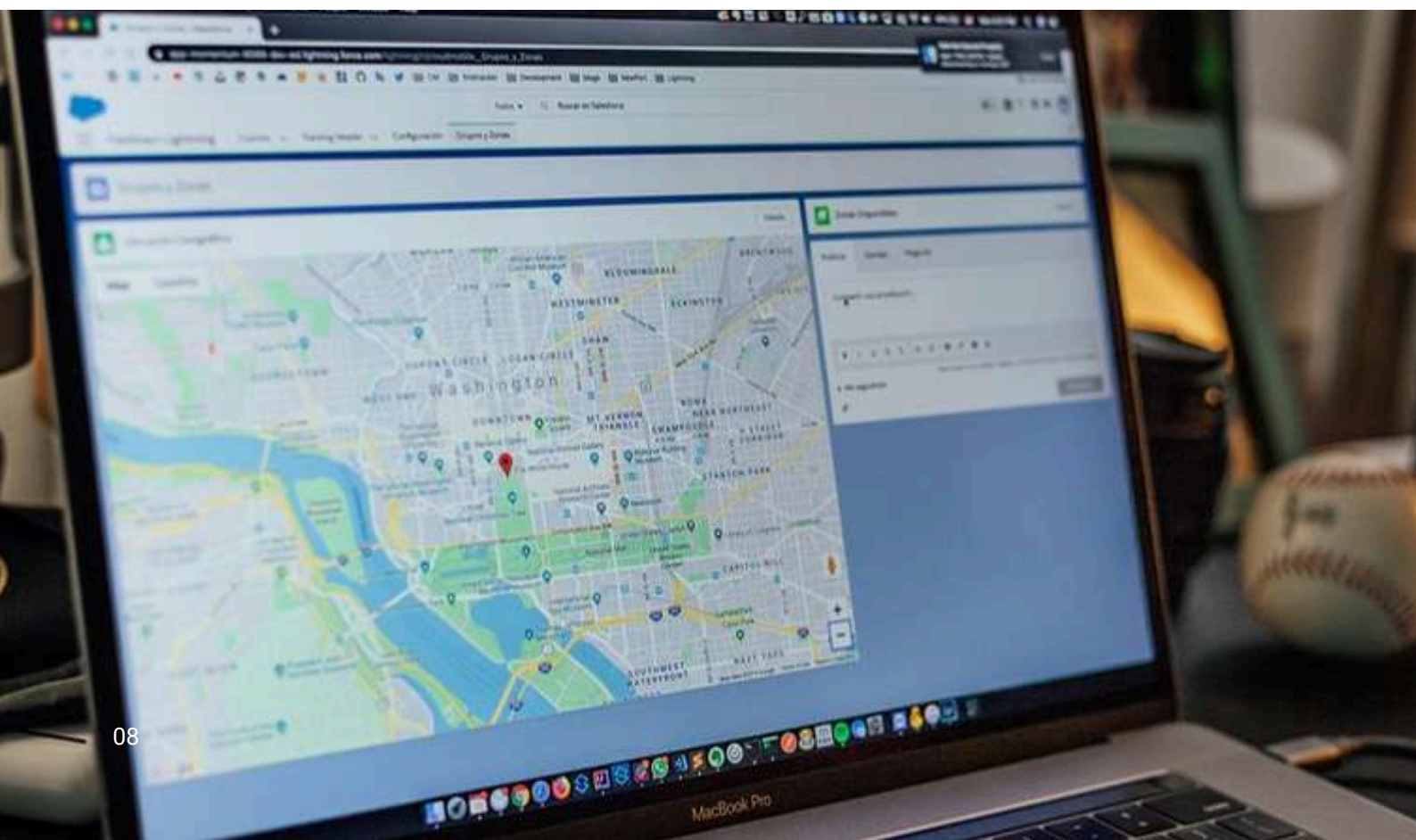
What Good Looks Like

Operations with strong execution visibility have a live view of delivery activity as it happens. Not just for dispatch, but across teams - operations managers, customer service staff, and leadership all working from the same current picture.

Diagnostic: Is This Gap Costing You?

Diagnostic Question	Yes	No
Does your dispatch team rely primarily on driver check-ins or phone calls to know where deliveries are up to?	☐	☐
Is it difficult to tell in real time which stops have been completed and which are still pending?	☐	☐
Do operational issues (failed deliveries, truck delays, access problems) typically come to light after the fact?	☐	☐
Are operations, customer service, and management working from different information during the day?	☐	☐
Do you find it difficult to reallocate capacity or adjust routes dynamically once the day has started?	☐	☐

If you answered 'Yes' to two or more of these questions, limited execution visibility is likely affecting both your operational performance and your customer experience.



Customer Communications Are Still Reactive



Customer expectations around delivery communication have shifted significantly, and propane operators are feeling the pressure. Both residential and commercial customers now expect clear visibility on when their delivery will arrive.

During busy periods, a surge in “where’s my delivery?” inquiries can overwhelm teams, increase wait times for other customers, and pull service staff away from more complex or higher-value interactions.

There’s also a safety consideration—without timely communication, drivers may arrive to unsecured dogs, locked gates, or tanks that haven’t been properly prepared for delivery.

What Good Looks Like

Proactive customer communication doesn’t require a major technology overhaul, but it does require connecting delivery execution data to a customer-facing communication layer. When customers receive an automated notification the day before their delivery, a confirmation on the morning of, and an update when the driver is en route, the inbound call volume for delivery inquiries drops substantially.

Diagnostic: Is This Gap Costing You?

Diagnostic Question	Yes	No
Do customers regularly call to ask when their delivery is scheduled?	☐	☐
Does your service team spend significant time each day answering delivery status inquiries?	☐	☐
Is customer communication about deliveries primarily reactive (responding to inquiries) rather than proactive?	☐	☐
Do you experience failed deliveries because customers weren't home or access wasn't available?	☐	☐
Have you received customer complaints or lost customers due to lack of delivery visibility?	☐	☐

If you answered 'Yes' to two or more of these questions, the gap in customer communication is likely costing you in both service team time and customer retention.



Data Is Collected, But Not Fully Utilized



The Challenge

Modern propane operations generate a significant amount of data. Route performance. Delivery times. Stop durations. Driver productivity. Customer fill rates. Fleet activity. The data exists in routing systems, in mobile apps, in back-office platforms, in GPS systems.

But in many operations, that data sits in silos. It's spread across systems that don't talk to each other. The result is that data is used for reporting rather than decision-making.

What Good Looks Like

When operational data is consolidated and made visible in real time, it transforms from a reporting function into a management tool. This kind of visibility enables a culture of continuous improvement. When performance data is visible and accessible, it becomes easier to identify what's working, what isn't, and where the next opportunity lies.

Diagnostic: Is This Gap Costing You?

Diagnostic Question	Yes	No
Is operational performance data primarily available in end-of-day or end-of-week reports rather than in real time?	☐	☐
Is your performance data spread across multiple systems that require manual effort to consolidate?	☐	☐
Do managers struggle to answer basic performance questions ('How are routes tracking today?') during the working day?	☐	☐
Are operational decisions primarily based on experience and instinct rather than current data?	☐	☐
Is it difficult to identify and act on performance trends before they become significant problems?	☐	☐

If you answered 'Yes' to two or more of these questions, your operational data is likely supporting reporting rather than decision-making, and there is significant untapped value in making it work harder.



Case Study

Eastern Propane & Oil: Closing All Five Gaps

With a team of over 500 employees, Eastern Propane & Oil, Inc. serves more than 100,000 residential and commercial propane and oil customers across 5 states in New England. Operating from 14 district locations, Eastern manages a fleet of 165 delivery trucks with the support of 6 dedicated dispatchers.

The Challenge

Eastern already had routing technology in place, and it was delivering value. But as the business had grown, the gaps around routing had become increasingly visible. The team identified six specific pain points that were limiting their ability to operate at full efficiency:

1. **Inefficient route planning** and scheduling
2. A **legacy routing system** that couldn't dynamically adjust routes based on actual delivery gallons
3. **Limited visibility** into delivery schedules and customer updates
4. **Poor integration** between their ERP system and the meters on their delivery trucks
5. A complex, difficult-to-use routing system with **limited integration visibility**, making ongoing support a challenge
6. An **outdated mobile delivery application** that was slow and unreliable in areas with low or saturated cellular coverage

The business needed a solution that was more user-friendly, built on modern technology, and capable of integrating reliably across all the systems their drivers and dispatchers depended on.

Case Study

The Solution

Eastern partnered with Bestrane and Descartes to implement an advanced Gas & Fuel solution, combining Descartes route planning with Bestrane Edge to address both the routing core and the operational gaps surrounding it.

The objective was clear: a seamless scheduling and routing system that enhances efficiency, improves communication, boosts visibility, and supports an exceptional customer experience. Specifically, the solution was designed to reduce the time dispatchers spent managing routes throughout the day, and to give drivers a mobile application that was intuitive, responsive, and built on a platform that would evolve with modern technology.

The Results



Improved Delivery Efficiency

A 7% YoY increase in gallons delivered per hour and a 2% boost in gallons per mile.



Greater Visibility and Control

Auditing and visibility capabilities simplified management compared to legacy systems.



More Stops, Less Hassle

Drivers completed more stops with less time spent managing the mobile application.



Simpler, Smarter Processes

The solution was easier to learn and use, enabling wider team involvement in logistics.

Self-Assessment

Rate Your Operation Across the Five Gaps

Use this scorecard to assess where your operation currently stands across each of the five gaps.

Scoring Guide

- 1 – Critical:** This gap is actively costing us. We have no meaningful capability here.
- 2 – At Risk:** We have some capability but significant gaps. Issues arise regularly.
- 3 – Developing:** We have reasonable capability but there are clear areas for improvement.
- 4 – Strong:** This area is working well. We have strong capability and few issues.

Diagnostic Question	1 Critical	2 At Risk	3 Developing	4 Strong
Gap 1: Order accuracy & demand-driven planning	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gap 2: Manual Input when capturing field data	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gap 3: Real-time execution visibility	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gap 4: Proactive customer communications	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gap 5: Real-time operational data & insights	☐	☐	☐	☐

Interpreting Your Score

17–20 (Mostly Strong): Your operation is performing well across most areas. Focus on the one or two gaps where you scored lowest.

11–16 (Developing): You have solid foundations but clear opportunities. Prioritize the gaps scoring 1–2 and consider which improvements would have the most impact.

5–10 (At Risk / Critical): There are significant efficiency opportunities across your operation. The good news: addressing even two or three of these gaps in a coordinated way can produce meaningful results relatively quickly.

Technology That Works Alongside Your Routing System

Bestrane Edge is a modular solution suite built specifically to address the operational gaps that exist around route planning. It works alongside your existing routing platform, rather than replacing it.

Each module targets a specific gap:

Edge Orders

Demand-driven order forecasting and generation that feeds optimized orders directly into your route planning application.

Edge Capture

Mobile application integration with in-truck devices (pumps, meters, registers) for automatic, real-time delivery data capture.

Edge Engage

Proactive customer communications: automated delivery notifications and two-way messaging before, during, and after delivery.

Edge Insights

Real-time dashboards, control towers, and performance reporting that make operational data actionable throughout the day.

Because Bestrane Edge is modular, you can start with the gap that matters most and expand from there. There's no requirement to implement everything at once and no need to change your routing platform to get started.

Ready to talk through your operation?

Book a personalized demo with our team. We will walk through how Bestrane Edge addresses the specific gaps in your operation and show you exactly what Eastern Propane & Oil's team now has at their fingertips.

Book a Demo → bestrane.com.au/contact-us

