



BEST PRACTICES FOR OWNER-OPERATORS



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INTRODUCTION:

Truckstop.com has been working with carriers and owner-operators since 1995. Through our constant contact with the people we strive to support, they have taught us a lot about what it's like to be the owner-operator of a trucking company. Most lessons are

learned the hard way through trial and error. Other lessons can be learned beforehand by researching good business basics to make sure you are heading in a good – and **profitable!** – direction. This collection of owner-operator business tips should help.

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PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS

Always get detention time documentation.

Drivers typically give the shipper or receiver an industry standard time of 2 hours (unless otherwise stated and agreed upon) before detention time sets in. That means additional compensation isn't provided until more than 2 hours have gone by. For detention time to be enforced, it is the driver's responsibility to track and provide documented proof of arrival and wait times by having an authorized individual at the pick-up and delivery facilities sign, or at least initial, date, and time-stamp their arrival. Train your drivers to always get this documentation, and pick it up yourself if you're the driver. And consider using a load tracking app which can help with this through geo-fencing and trip details.

"We found all of our brokers on Truckstop.com."

Karen Higgins
H&B Transport



Answer check calls.

Most brokers require daily check-calls from truck drivers to confirm the loads they have in route are on schedule. Failure to make required check-calls can result in fees that are deducted from a carrier's pay and an owner-operator's bottom line. A load tracking app may help cut down on having to take check calls, so consider using one and having your drivers use them, as well.

Beware of scams.

The transportation industry is notorious for hustlers and scammers. Make sure you are taking care of yourself and your business because being negligent in this area could bankrupt your trucking company.

Use precautionary measures when accepting loads from strangers.

Don't jump into new business relationships without performing an adequate level of due diligence. With today's technology, it's more important than ever that you have an internal process in place for checking out potential new business partners. Always research a company before working with them. Try an internet search if you aren't sure about the broker, and double-check the broker's company has a website with reviews and references to help give you some peace of mind. If anything seems fishy, call the number on the company's website and ask to speak with the broker you're working with for additional confirmation.

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Make sure you thoroughly analyze a rate that seems high. Look closely at other loads in the same lanes for comparison. Consider using industry software tools that can provide accurate, up-to-date, and effective rate comparisons (like Truckstop.com's Rate Mate).

Book with brokers that are good for business.

Anyone can go to a load board and find a load, but you need to be able to find the loads that are right for you and your trucking business. There are actions you can take so that you aren't always worried about finding the next load. If you're struggling to find loads that make it easier to run your truck AND are consistently profitable, decide ahead of time who you want to work with. Figuring out what kind of customers you want to focus on will help you find them. It also means you can better narrow in on your business goals.

Here's what to look for when deciding who your customers should be:

- Established brokers with a good reputation; if they don't have a good reputation, make sure you understand the risk involved.
- Reliable loads suited to the lanes you want to run and/or convenient locations.

- Loads are priced fairly and at market value; if a load is under/over, make sure it's for a reason that suits your needs.
- Quick pay options and reasonable days-to-pay.
- Fair-minded and reasonable brokers and shippers.
- Value-focused that appreciate drivers who provide excellent customer service.

Use products that will help you find the right customers for your business. Consider things like a broker's credit score, experience factor, and risk level, as well as the average number of days it takes them to pay a carrier (like Truckstop.com's Credit Stop).

PRO TIP:

In general, if a rate is bad, then the broker and load details and/or lane better be good. If the broker is bad, make sure you negotiate for a good load at a good rate. If the load or lane aren't appealing, the price and broker need to make up for it. Some truckers opt to work with bad brokers to move easy loads to get high rates. Some truckers take a low rate if they love the broker, the load, or the lane. Only you can decide what works for you and your business.



RULES AND REGULATIONS



Consider the Hours of Service (HOS) Rules.

When contracting to haul a load, make sure you have ample time to make the pick-up and delivery times. If something seems weird about the time being allotted to move a load, there is probably a reason why. Be aware of any special instructions with the load such as extra pick-ups or drop-offs so you avoid any delays during loading and unloading. Read through the Bills of Ladings (BOLs) to make sure your name is on them and that you're hauling the correct load. It is never a good idea to assume the dock workers get it right every time; they don't, and hauling the wrong load is considered a service failure for the carrier.

Know what to expect during a roadside inspection.

The FMCSA defines Roadside Inspections as "examinations of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) and/or drivers by Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) Inspectors."

The FMCSA is tasked with improving roadway safety, and they do that in part by reducing the number of crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks.

CMV roadside inspections are performed to help fulfill the FMCSA's mission by ensuring that large trucks and buses are up to certain regulations which in turn helps to keep our roadways safe. Inspections that result in serious violations place drivers and/or vehicles under Out-of-Service Orders. Out-of-Service Orders must be corrected before the driver and/or vehicle can go back to work.

There are eight levels of inspection that could be performed on a driver and/or their vehicle. The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) has a comprehensive explanation of each of the inspection levels. Below are general descriptions of each level so you have an idea of what to expect; it is not meant to be a comprehensive list. For the details of each level, visit the FMCSA or CVSA websites.



Level I: North American Standard Inspection

Level I is inspection of the vehicle and driver, and tends to be the most comprehensive. The driver inspection includes a review of their Commercial Driver's License (CDL), alcohol and drug use, Medical Examiner's and Skill Performance Evaluation (SKE) certificates, Hours of Service (HOS) compliance, record of duty status, seatbelt usage, and vehicle inspection report(s). The vehicle inspection includes:

- Brake, electrical, exhaust, and fuel systems
- Cargo securement
- Coupling devices
- Driveline/driveshaft mechanisms
- Frames
- Hazardous materials compliance
- Lighting devices (headlamps, taillamps, turn signals, etc.)
- Steering mechanisms
- Suspensions
- Tires (including hubs, rims, wheels)
- Van and open-top trailer bodies
- Windshield wipers

Level II: Walk-Around Driver/Vehicle Inspection

A Level II inspection typically includes only what can be examined

without physically getting underneath the vehicle. At a minimum, the driver inspection must include a review of their CDL, alcohol and drug use, Medical Examiner's and SKE certificates, HOS compliance, record of duty status, seatbelt usage, and vehicle inspection report(s). The vehicle inspection needs to include:

- Brake, electrical, exhaust, and fuel systems
- Cargo securement
- Coupling devices
- Driveline/driveshaft mechanisms
- Frames
- Hazardous materials compliance
- Lighting devices (headlamps, taillamps, turn signals, etc.)
- Steering mechanisms
- Suspensions
- Tires (including hubs, rims, wheels)
- Van and open-top trailer bodies
- Windshield wipers

Level III: Driver/Credential/Administration Inspection

A Level III inspection is limited to the driver's credentials. It includes seatbelt usage, a review of their CDL, Medical Examiner's and SKE certificates, HOS compliance, alcohol and drug use, record of duty status, and vehicle inspection reports.

Level IV: Special Inspections

A Level IV inspection would typically include the review of a specific item. These are typically performed in support of a specific study or to confirm or deny a certain trend.

Level V: Vehicle-Only Inspection

A Level V inspection includes all of the items in a Level I North American Standard Inspection conducted at any location without needing a driver to be present.

Level VI: North American Standard Inspection for Transuranic Waste and Highway Route Controlled Quantities (HRCQ) of Radioactive Material

A Level VI inspection is the review of select radiological shipments and if the CMV is compliant with regulations surrounding the transport of radioactive materials. The inspection includes enhancements to the North American Standard Level I Inspection, radiological requirements, and the North American Standard Out-of-Service Criteria for Transuranic Waste and Highway Route Controlled Quantities of Radioactive material.

Level VII: Jurisdictional Mandated Commercial Vehicle Inspection

A Level VII inspection doesn't fit into the requirements of any of the other

inspection levels. It includes things like school buses, taxis, courtesy shuttles, limos, etc.

Level VIII: North American Standard Electronic Inspection

A Level VIII inspection is conducted electronically without direct interaction of an inspector while the vehicle is still in motion. The inspection includes:

- CDL with license class and endorsement(s)
- Electronic validation of who is operating the CMV
- Federal out-of-service order
- GPS coordinates – descriptive location
- HOS compliance
- License status
- Medical Examiner's and SPE Certificates
- Operating authority
- Power unit registration
- Record of duty status
- Unified Carrier Registration (UCR) compliance
- USDOT number



DOING EVERYDAY BUSINESS



Develop good work habits.

Good work habits are critical to your success, and that means asking some tough questions:

- **Are you comfortable driving over-the-road for long periods of time?** Although it isn't always necessary to be gone for weeks (or months) at a time, it's common. Trucking is nothing if not a lifestyle choice; decide if the call of the open road is the right lifestyle choice for you, because it will tax you physically, emotionally, and mentally.
- **How long are you okay being away from home?** Figure out now who's going to get your mail and respond to anything urgent. If you own a house and live alone, someone should check on it at least once a week to ensure a water line doesn't break, the furnace is working, the roof is intact, etc. Arrange for a lawn care service and any other on-going maintenance your house may need.
- **What family obligations do you have?** If you are in a relationship, make sure your significant other understands and is okay with your driving commitments. Be ready to work your driving schedule around custody agreements, and prepare mentally to miss major milestones and holidays on occasion.
- **Can you balance driving with managing a business?** If you are your own boss, you have to do everything a boss would, PLUS drive the truck. You have to stay on task, complete paperwork, and find your own loads. Many owner-operators learn it's better

to have a spouse or family member booking loads, doing the paperwork, and processing payments from an office than to try to do it all themselves.

Use backhaul searches.

It's no secret you are in a better position when you're in a location that has more loads coming out of it than going in. Use the features of a good load board (like Truckstop.com's) to your advantage by entering in the location you are exiting (or thinking about exiting), and leave the destination blank. This will provide a list of outgoing loads you can sort any way you want to – by rate, miles, company, destination, etc. Compare the loads and decide what locations are worth it to you. And don't forget to try this tactic to form a plan before you ever even head into a location, then you'll know what to expect when you get there!

Post your truck.

Not all loads get posted. Sometimes a load will sit on a load board for a long time before getting picked up. Help brokers find you by posting your truck instead of spending time searching for a load. For example, do you perform a specialty service? Maybe you've got your hazmat certificate or specialize in moving oversized freight. Make it easier for people to find you by getting your specific information out there. Include as many details about your truck and the services you provide as possible so the right people find you. This has the added benefit of building a customer base because when someone is looking for something specific, they'll know to come right to you in the future.



DRIVE SAFELY



Driving in Extreme Winter Conditions

Winter driving is more than slowing down and putting chains on your tires. It includes turning off the cruise control, being extra cautious on bridges and ramps, and slowing to a crawl when approaching intersections.

In addition, you'll want to take some additional safety precautions to make sure you're prepared for winter weather and can react appropriately while behind the wheel. There are a few simple things you can start implementing right away to be safer. For example, check your:

- **Brake lines:** Along with all of your typical pre-trip checks, make sure that all air is drained from your tanks to help avoid frozen brake lines.
- **Defrost and heater:** It's crucial that your defroster and heater are working; you don't want to discover a problem in the middle of nowhere.
- **Lights:** Make sure all your lights are cleared of snow, ice, and dirt before each trip and every time you stop. Even during the day, other drivers may have a hard time seeing you if it's snowing and your lights are obstructed.
- **Wipers:** Check and replace your wipers if you are heading into snow or rain, and ensure your washer fluid is topped off.

If you're driving on icy roads...

Your primary focus is to prevent skidding. Many drivers obey a quarter-mile rule in severe winter weather conditions when it comes to following distance, meaning maintain a distance between vehicles of at least a quarter mile. This may seem like more than necessary, but your following distance is one of the only things you can control in these conditions. It's your most useful tool when other drivers may not be as careful.

If a storm is coming...

When you know a severe storm is approaching, plan to drive your lane at a much lower speed (maybe even around 25 mph). Figure out where that will put you in relation to the hours of service regulations. Consider a few different options for overnight stops along the way and at your destination, and make sure to keep your options open so you have fewer surprises.

PRO TIP:

If you're out on a snow-covered or icy road, you won't be going anywhere close to the speed limit. Keep it slow, and pay attention to the spray generated by other drivers' tires. You'll know it's icy if the road appears wet, but there's not much spray coming off the tires in front of you.

Being gentle on the **foot brakes** will reduce the risk of skidding, but it's not the only thing to use with extreme caution. If you've lost traction, you won't want to use the clutch or engine brake

since it could make it worse. Gently let off the pedal and steer toward the direction the back end of your vehicle is heading so you can regain control.

If you have **low visibility**, don't focus too heavily on following the taillights in front of you since this could put you at risk of following that vehicle off the road if they get into trouble. Instead, try to distance yourself from the pack, and follow the paint on the highway.

Above all, the best thing a driver can do to stay safe in winter weather is to know when to get off the road. Remember, if you end up in a ditch, you will be the one to take the blame and the repercussions, not your dispatcher, broker, or anyone else that's pressuring you to make an appointment.

If you do need to make an urgent stop to stay safe while the storm passes, never stop on the shoulder of the road. This could cause a chain reaction with other drivers. You're better off creeping along with your hazards on until you find a safe turnout.

Driving in Extreme Heat

Summer driving may seem simple when compared to the treacherous conditions of winter. In reality, there are circumstances that make summer driving even more challenging. For example, traffic is a lot heavier on highways with families hitting the roads for summer vacations. There are more teen drivers on the road – with brand new licenses! – now that school is out. Plus, construction

zones are a lot more prevalent creating delays and frustrated drivers. All of this means you need to stay alert if you want to stay safe on summer roads. Pay special attention to your:

- **Brakes:** You're more likely to suffer from overheated brakes in 100+ degree temperatures. Test your brakes intermittently to ensure they aren't losing friction.
- **Engine:** Your engine is more likely to overheat in extreme heat. Keep an eye on your temperature gauge, and take steps to cool it down when needed.
- **Tires:** Proper inflation of tires is essential year-round, but it may be more critical during the summer months. Both under- and over-inflated tires when combined with hot pavement can increase the risk of a tire blowout. Make sure you are vigilant with your pre-trip checks.

Always keep extra water in the cab of your truck in case you get stranded. When temperatures are rising, if your A/C goes out and you're stuck on the side of the road, you don't want to run out of water which can lead to heat stroke before you know it.



PRO TIP:

Decrease skidding by keeping your fuel tanks full which puts extra weight over the drive tires.



**MAKE MORE
MONEY**

Figure out ways to cut costs.

One of the fastest ways to impact a company's bottom line isn't to generate more revenue, but to cut costs. Consider cutting costs in these two areas:

- 1. Fuel:** it's almost always the highest costs truck drivers have.
- 2. Detention time:** around 65% of drivers lose revenue due to detention.

Cutting fuel costs:

A typical combination truck spends most of its operating time at highway speeds. The impact of speed on fuel economy depends on many factors, but as a general rule of thumb, **increasing speed by 1 mile per hour reduces fuel economy by about 0.1 miles per gallon.** Excessive speed will also lead to higher maintenance costs by increasing wear on the engine, tires, and brakes.

Poor fuel mileage can be a make-or-break proposition for many carriers, and whether you get 6 mpg or 8 mpg depends on your skills and habits as a driver. **The way drivers handle their trucks has a major impact on fuel economy.** It pays to encourage drivers to adopt the most efficient driving techniques.

Don't rev the engine when starting a truck. Let the engine warm up on its own. It takes about 10 minutes to reach adequate operating temperature. Warm-ups longer than 10 minutes, except in subzero temperatures, simply waste fuel. Run at the most fuel-efficient engine speeds.

Class 8 trucks consume about .8 gallons of fuel for every hour they idle, and **engine idling is one of the most negative effects on an engine's life.** Long-haul rigs can spend 2,000 hours each year off the highway idling their engines. At .8 gallons per hour, that represents 1,600 gallons of diesel fuel consumed by each truck each year. Multiply that number by the average cost of diesel, and you can see that the cost fleets incur equates to big dollars per truck. **Auxiliary power units reduce pollution, protect the environment, and bring your truck into compliance with anti-idling laws.** You can turn off your engine, be comfortable, and turn down your fuel costs.

Pay attention to drag. At highway speeds, aerodynamic drag accounts for approximately 65% of the fuel consumed by a tractor-trailer. The four major areas of aerodynamic drag on a tractor-trailer are the front of the tractor, the gap



between the tractor and trailer, the side/underbody of the trailer, and the rear of the trailer.

Three things to keep in mind that can make a huge difference:

- 1.** The most fuel efficient and successful trucking fleets use aerodynamic trucks. Trailer tails, side skirts, eco-flaps, and airtabs are all simple, inexpensive modifications for reducing aerodynamic drag and significantly improving fuel mileage.
- 2.** A good tire maintenance program will improve tire wear and fuel efficiency (e.g. daily air checks, regular alignment checks, etc.).
- 3.** Preventive maintenance pays off by avoiding unnecessary and expensive repairs in the long run. It minimizes downtime, increases equipment lifespan, and saves fuel.

Trucking companies can't afford to spend long hours sitting at a dock waiting to get loaded or unloaded. Changes to hours of service regulations have amplified the problem; drivers are leaving the industry and owner-operators are going out of business because no one can afford to sit at a dock with detention time accruing. Detention fees are just a drop in the bucket when compared to what those hours actually cost in lost revenue.

Figure out your cost per mile.

Knowing how much it costs to keep your truck (or trucks) rolling down the highway is the single most important calculation you can do for your trucking business. Identifying your cost per mile helps your business by allowing you to see spending patterns and areas you can cut costs. It means you know what a fair rate is to move a load so you don't operate at a loss.

Start by identifying the three types of expenses:

- 1. Fixed costs:** These are expenses incurred whether a truck is hauling or not. It includes things like insurance, the truck lease or loan, permits, accounting services, load board usage, etc.
- 2. Variable costs:** These are the costs of operating a truck. It includes fuel, truck maintenance and repair, meals and lodging when you're on the road, etc. These costs vary from one month to the next, and they typically increase the more you're running a truck (more fuel = higher costs). On the other hand, some variable expenses become less per mile as you run more miles.
- 3. Salary:** This is what you pay drivers or yourself. It will likely be your biggest expense.

To calculate the cost per mile, you'll need:

- All of your expense receipts for a month (fuel, food, lodging, etc.)
- All of your bills for a month (insurance, truck lease/loan, phone, etc.)
- Salary costs for a month
- Odometer readings from your truck(s) for a month

Determine the total monthly cost per mile by adding the fixed, variable, and salary costs together, then divide them by the total number of miles the truck traveled that month.

$$\frac{\text{TOTAL EXPENSES}}{\text{TRUCK MILES}} = \text{YOUR COST PER MILE}$$

You want to be in a situation in which you are paid more than your costs of operation. If it seems high, you may need to take on additional loads to increase your profit and help drive down the cost per mile. In general, the cost per mile decreases as the miles increase.

If increasing the miles being driven isn't feasible, look for other ways to cut your operating costs. Instead of eating out three times a day, eat out once and rely more heavily on sandwiches and protein bars. Call your cell phone company to get your bill lowered. Reduce the amount of time you spend idling or drive 5 mph slower to save on fuel costs.

If you're having trouble finding time to calculate or keep track of the numbers, try using an accounting software (like QuickBooks) or talk to an accountant. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain (especially in profits) by calculating your rate per mile. Do the calculations, and start using what you learn to increase your bottom line.

Plan your route.

Once loaded, it's essential to know the most direct and efficient route to your designated delivery location. Knowing exactly where you're going will help you avoid any unexpected pitfalls or sketchy stops. You can pre-plan routes with tools like Truckstop.com's Fuel Desk which provides valuable information on fuel stops and current fuel prices on the way to your destination. Optimizing your route and fuel expenses will significantly improve your profit margins on the loads you haul.





RELATIONSHIPS MATTER



Focus on building relationships.

It might be hard to hear it, but focusing on having good relationships with brokers can help your wallet later down the road. If it's a lane you like to run because it gets you close to home or pays well, make sure the broker knows that, then provide the best service you can so they want to go to you in the future. If you're reliable, provide excellent customer service, and they know you're interested, they will call you directly instead of posting a load to the board, and that saves both of you time and resources.

Have a good business plan.

Having a business plan in place will help you focus your efforts, formalize goals, and determine a long-term plan for your trucking company. So if you're thinking of making the switch from truck driver to trucking company owner, the first place to start is a business plan. A business plan will help you:

- Get outside funding if you need it.
- Focus on what you want to do so you can organize and manage the business better.
- Figure out cash flow so you have what you need coming in to pay the bills going out.
- Establish a set of goals to hold you accountable.

The U.S. Small Business Administration

website (www.sba.gov/business-guide) is a great resource if you're just starting out, as well as the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (www.oida.com).

Negotiate with brokers in the right way.

A common complaint among carriers and owner-operators is around the struggle of negotiating with brokers. Carriers have the feeling that brokers are trying to take advantage of them, but more typically brokers are working under a narrower margin than they think. These five tips direct from a broker may help.

1. Don't just talk – listen.

Ask your question, and then let the broker explain what their problem is. In other words, listen to them explain the load they need moved. Never forget that you're not the only one with a problem (trying to find a load and make money). The broker also has a problem: They have a load that needs to be covered and a boss or customer breathing down their neck about it. There will be times that if you hear a broker out, you'll be told the information you want to hear, and you'll find that you have a solution to both of your problems. Always make sure you take the time to listen.

2. Focus on the broker's pressure – not yours.

If you focus too much on your own needs to get a load and start rolling, you are giving away all of your power because the broker sees that they have

the solution to your problem. However, if you view it as more of a give and take, you begin to understand and recognize the pressure that the other side is under to cover a load. Instead, you see that you can provide the solution. This will create a significantly more collaborative effort toward a common goal. You're not the only one feeling the pressure, so don't give all the power to the broker.

3. Show the broker how you can provide a solution to their problem.

If you understand the problem the broker has, you can easily communicate how you can solve the basic needs of their problem. They have a load; do you have a truck and trailer that's empty? They have specific loading requirements; can you accommodate them? It's not a bad thing to make sure they know that you can in fact solve their problem. You are easing their worries as the conversation goes on giving them faith in your abilities. Too many times while talking to a carrier and blabbing on answers to the questions being asking, a broker may start to feel uneasy because they aren't getting any feedback. They could be thinking to themselves, "Do you even have a truck for me, or can we just go ahead and end this conversation?" Help solve the challenge of getting a load moved by communicating to the broker how you're going to solve their problem.

4. Know the market and your needs.

This is self-explanatory, and Truckstop.com can help provide the tools necessary

to figure out the current market, market average, and your needs as a business owner and operator. The more informed you are, the faster we can work out a deal. Use the tools at your disposal to go into negotiations with knowledge of the market.

5. Take ownership of the conversation.

This is an important one regardless of whether you called the broker or the broker called you. Take ownership of what your needs are. Everyone knows that you both have the same problem and are looking for a solution, so voice your needs instead of forcing the broker into a corner. Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements. For example, instead of, "Could you give more?" or "You would need to pay me XXX amount of money to take accept load," take ownership while understanding the broker's interests. "I understand there is a margin we have to keep in mind, but I would need XXX amount of money in order to haul that load." Take ownership of your own needs by using "I" statements to get closer to the goal.

Provide load delivery and payment paperwork right away.

Upon delivery of each load, make sure you have all required paperwork in order and that it is immediately provided to the broker so you avoid any delays in the contracted payment terms. It's always a good idea to include your

invoice for the services rendered with your paperwork. Most brokers will accept copies of the BOLs and other required paperwork, however there are still a small percentage that require the originals. Remember, the clock starts ticking on the agreed-upon terms for payment once the broker has received all required paperwork so that they can bill their customer, receive payment, and pay you.

Read the fine print.

Always read Broker/Carrier Agreements and Rate Confirmations in their entirety. Pay particular attention to any mention of deductions and other verbiage which may prevent you from exercising your right to compensation based on established industry standards. "Truck Ordered Not Used" and "Detention Pay" are two common examples.



PRO TIP:

If there are terms in the agreements that don't meet with your approval, cross them out, modify the terms, and initial your changes before signing and returning the contracts.

Talk to other truckers.

No one knows like the other truckers on the road. If you have questions, start asking them. Get on your CB radio, use

trucker forums like Truckers Report, and strike up conversations at truck stops. Other truck drivers are the best possible resource for learning more about the ins and outs of the road. They can provide tips, let you know about dangerous weather conditions, and alert you when there's road construction. If you aren't regularly using a CB, change that habit now – it's one of your best friends when you're over the road.

Review broker credit worthiness and performance ratings.

Find out a broker's average days-to-pay score, if they have any performance issues, or if there are any other areas of concern. There are several tools available to help carriers make good decisions about the brokers they haul for. Find one that lets you view a broker's days-to-pay information, experience factor, credit score, and risk level so you can feel secure with partners you trust. Having a broker's average days-to-pay information and seeing if there are any outstanding non-payment or performance issues can help you make an informed decision. There are some that will also provide proactive monitoring of the brokers you like to work with on a regular basis. You should also consider using a reputable, non-recourse factoring company to guarantee payment – even if the broker fails to pay the factor. Truckstop.com's Credit Stop is a great tool to find vetted brokers and long-term trucking partners.



UTILIZE SOFTWARE

Use a good load board.

A load board is going to keep your truck(s) moving. It's important to use a board that reputable and vets users so you know you're working with people who are going to pay you. It's even better if they're using a quick pay service of some kind so you aren't waiting for an accounts receivable department to get a check in the mail.

A good load board will include advanced search options so you can search by weight, size, commodity, pick-up time, and more. It will help you find the loads better suited to you and your trucking business; it may come with a premium rate or fit into your schedule better. While not all the loads posted will include this type of information, you may often find better loads if you're filtering down to your specific needs.

A good load board is the best tool you can have at your disposal. Use one that provides enough flexibility to support your unique business needs. Make sure it has plenty of volume so you have the freedom to work with who you want, when you want, and move what you want. (Truckstop.com's Load Board has hundreds of thousands of loads to choose from!) It should offer features you need to make the right decisions for your business. Look for options by sorting by rate, origin, and broker rating. This will help you find loads that work best for you. The best load boards will offer tons of features like the ability to create multiple stops so you can plan ahead, and heat maps so you know where the best paying loads are.

PRO TIP:

Be careful when using free load boards. Although they are easy on the wallet, they may cost you money in the long run. With less features, higher security risks, and fewer loads to choose from, you may end up leaving money on the table.

Use a load tracking service.

Use a load tracking service as a way to encourage brokers to work with you, and look for ones that include easy document exchange and storage, as well as automatic check calls. It can save you from being charged unexpected fees later. Truckstop.com's Load Tracking app shares milestones and geo-fences within two miles of pick-up and delivery locations. You can also accept broker tender from notifications which will save you time.

Use the software tools that are available.

This means using rate forecasting tools, looking at a broker's credit rating, using apps that help you locate the best fuel rates and help you find parking. There are so many tools now available that are all designed to make you more efficient – that means more money in your pocket. Visit Truckstop.com for a complete list of the software solutions we offer that can simplify paperwork and make you more money.