



Load Tracking Buyer's Guide for Freight Brokers and 3PLs

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How Soon Can I Start Tracking?



How Often Can I Check on My Load?



Can't I Just Manage by Exception?



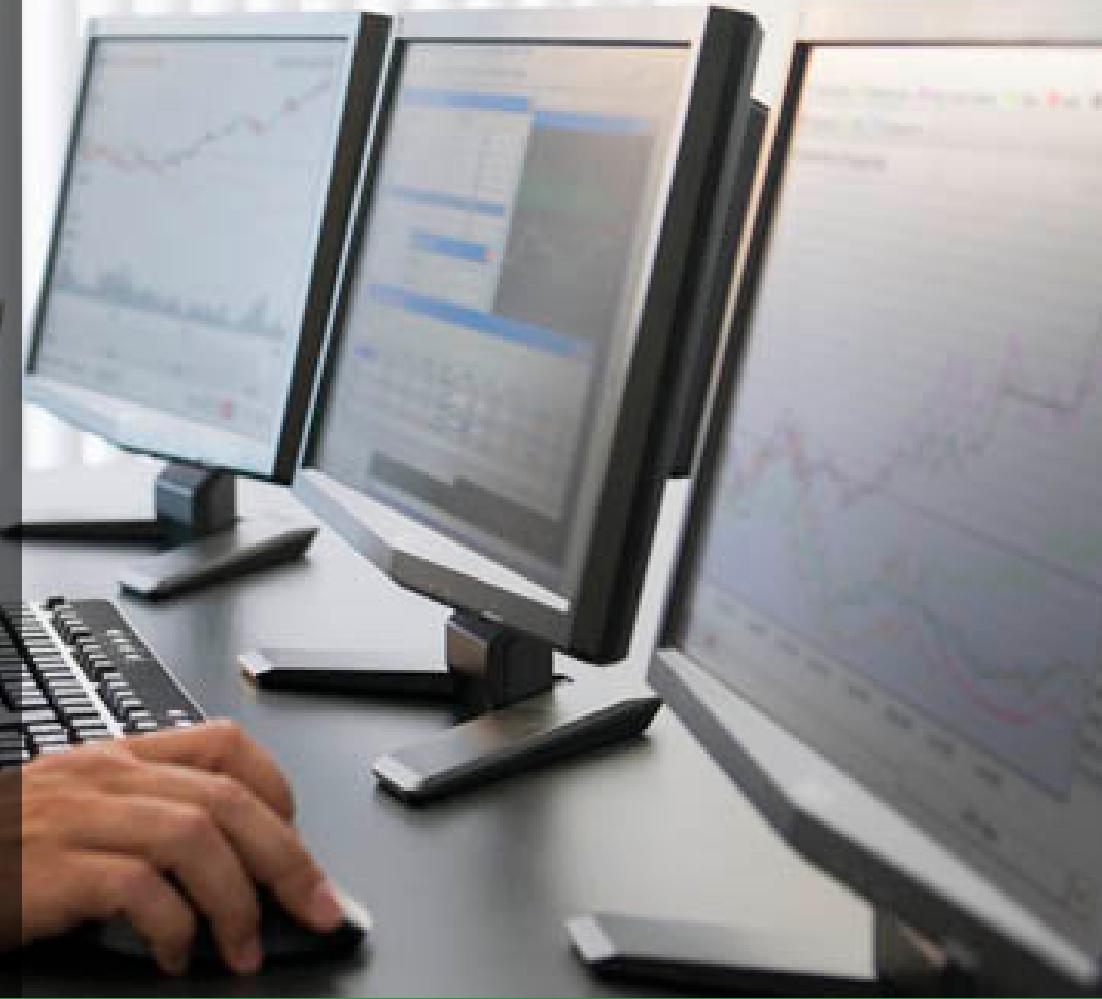
What's My Cost Per Load?



Which Features Are Bundled?



How Do I Persuade Small Carriers to Accept Tracking?



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If you're a freight broker or 3PL, and your shipper customers haven't asked you to deploy a load tracking solution, it's time to get ready. If you've tracked loads before, but you're not happy with your current system, this guide is for you too.

Shippers are strapped for capacity, to the point where they are regularly asking freight brokers and 3PLs to move valuable, business-critical freight that used to be tendered only to contract carriers. These hauls often require a greater level of visibility and scrutiny while the freight is in transit. If you're not ready with a load tracking solution, you'll be making a lot of check calls -- or worse, you won't have an answer when the shipper calls about the current location of that important load.

Load tracking solutions are available from a number of vendors, in a variety of packages, and each has different feature sets and associated costs. Here are some questions to consider.



How Soon Can I Start Tracking?

Do you have a last-minute load that requires tracking? You need to find a solution that you can use right away, without an initial installation, integration, or associated start-up costs. One well known tracking solution promises to get you started "within weeks." They integrate the tracking solution into your transportation management system. If you have a TMS, that could be a good option for the future, but you won't be able to use it now, and you could miss that important opportunity with a good customer. Look for a solution that works right away, preferably with a month-to-month payment schedule, so you can try it out before you commit to an ongoing expense.



How Often Can I Check on My Load?

Suppose your customer calls and asks, "Where's my load now?" You want to be able to answer immediately, with the precise, current location. Better still, you should be able to view the status of every load at a glance, so you'll know if a scheduled delivery is at risk. If there are no problems, you can continue your work without interruptions.

Not all tracking solutions can provide that level of service. Some solutions track the driver's cell phone by "pinging" the service provider at regular intervals, often a couple of hours apart. So when the shipper calls, you might have to send an extra "ping" and wait at least a few minutes for the most current information.

That method was designed to work with old-style cell phones, which did not have GPS capabilities. Now that virtually all truck drivers carry smartphones with built-in GPS, today's tracking solutions detect the phone's location, direction, and progress, via an app that is downloaded by the driver. With the app, you can track the location and status of one load -- or all the loads that are currently active -- in real time. See them on a map or in a list, whenever your customer asks, or any time you want.



Can't I Just Manage by Exception?

Your load tracking solution should adapt to your work style. For example, if you want to manage exceptions only, you need a tracking system that makes it easy for you to identify the status of every load at a glance. Then you can direct your attention to any load that is off-schedule or at risk. If everything is going as planned, you should be able to focus on your other work with no interruptions.



What's My Cost Per Load?

Some tracking solutions cost between \$5.00 and \$10.00 per load, not including set-up fees and long-term contracts. During a period of high rates -- and some margin compression -- those fees could eat up a big chunk of the net operating profit per load for a small or mid-sized freight broker. Look for a vendor with a cost per load below \$3.00, especially if you expect to use the service often. If you expect to track loads only occasionally, look for a month-to-month contract with little to no start-up expense.



Which Features Are Bundled?

If you specialize in domestic truck freight, you may not need to track additional modes or off-shore destinations. Does the vendor include tracking for international, rail, or ocean freight in all available service bundles? You don't want to pay for those features if you're not using them.



How Do I Persuade Small Carriers to Accept Tracking?

While large carriers may accept tracking solutions more readily, small fleets, owner-operators, and independent drivers are often uneasy about being tracked, especially by an unfamiliar vendor. You can make tracking more acceptable by choosing a provider that's trusted by truckers, and has a reputation for protecting their privacy. Even better, the solution you choose should enable the driver to turn off the app after delivery, to discontinue tracking of the empty truck and its operator.

Discover DAT's Load Tracking Solution

DAT OnTime™ is a load tracking application that enables freight brokers and 3PLs to track their loads through an app installed on the driver's smartphone. It's the newest product from the company brokers and carriers have trusted for more than 40 years.

To learn more or to get a live demo of DAT OnTime, call or send us a request.

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