

Fast Freight:

How Kingsgate reimagedined the supply chain through automation

By Matt Sullivan | DAT Freight & Analytics

In the not-so-distant past, shopping online was mostly a waiting game. If you needed something quickly, the Web wasn't the place to get it. But now? Place your order and you might receive the package faster than you can say "snail mail."

Companies like Kingsgate are key to that transformation. For more than 34 years, the family-owned and operated 3PL has embraced technology and found innovative ways to deliver speed and efficiency to their shipper customers, with unique specialties in e-commerce, retail and food supply chains.

"If we want to automate something, we don't want to automate half of it – we want to automate all of it," said Tom Curee, Senior Vice President of Strategy and Innovation at the Cincinnati-based 3PL.

Embracing innovation allows Kingsgate to not just keep up with the demands of e-commerce,

but set the pace. And they're setting new land-speed records along the way.

Kingsgate partnered with DAT Freight & Analytics to fully automate the load-tendering process for their motor carrier network.

As a result, select loads that they post to the DAT One load board network now include the BOOK NOW option, allowing carriers to book freight literally at the touch of a button.

Not only has that freed up internal resources, allowing the team to focus more energy on harder-to-cover shipments, but loads posted with the BOOK NOW option get covered in a fraction of the time it once took.

"The amount of time it takes for us to cover a load has been trimmed to probably less than five minutes," said Curee. "Last week, a rep posted a shipment to the load board, and two minutes later it was already covered by using BOOK NOW. That's hard to even put a number to, because we wouldn't have even started working on the load yet using the traditional methods."

When you can cover a load in less time than it takes to microwave a bag of popcorn, you know you're onto something.

Innovative problem solvers

Kingsgate serves a diverse client base, but no matter the vertical, the 3PL isn't afraid to think outside the box to provide their customers' with best-in-class transportation solutions. But that willingness to embrace technology doesn't come at the expense of the customer and carrier relationships that are key to this industry.

"We have always maintained a family-based culture," said Curee. "Kingsgate is family-owned and operated, and the partners right now are the sons and daughters of the founders. That's core to who we are."

"We use technology to better foster our business relationships, not replace them."

Their tech-savvy team also fills a crucial need for their shipper customers. For many of them, investing in a transportation management system (TMS) and managing all aspects of it doesn't make sense, but Kingsgate can provide something of a "TMS lite" solution to serve as the technological backbone of their transportation operations.

Taking care of carriers

"We're taking a lot of the hassle out of booking a load, so even if you're not already onboarded with us, we've got that process entirely automated as well,"

Tom Curee, Senior Vice President of Strategy

That's allowed Kingsgate to expand their carrier network while also making better use of it.

"We look at a metric of loads per carrier, so we look to see how many active carriers we have and how many loads we're putting on those active carriers," Curee said. "It allows us to see how well we're utilizing our carrier network. It also helps us identify where there might be gaps—where we need to keep setting people up."

Offering an automated booking solution also makes them more attractive to carriers they haven't worked with before.

"We have had more carriers reach out to onboard with us, plus carriers that we've maybe loaded once or twice and haven't seen for months," Curee explained. "That's been an exciting piece for us—seeing some of those carriers who were

already in our network get exposure to some of the shipments we're trying to move."

Another benefit: Carriers can sign up for BOOK NOW loads regardless of whether or not anyone is in the office, effectively transforming Kingsgate into a 24/7 operation.

"We flipped the switch and went live on a Thursday night, and late that night we had carriers go in and book loads through BOOK NOW at a time when we wouldn't have been covering freight," Curee confirmed. "They went in automatically signed the rate confirmation and everything was done and ready to go when we came in Friday morning."

The automated option gives loads posted by Kingsgate more visibility as well, which plays into their pricing strategies.

"A lot of logistics companies may go into this with the strategy of putting their lowest price to see if a carrier takes it," said Curee. "If a carrier thinks that all we offer is cheap freight, then they'll just block us on the load board and never see our posts, so we use API connections to the market rates within DAT iQ and try to figure out what is a fair rate for both our carriers and shipper customers."

Only getting started

These new efficiencies free up Kingsgate's workforce in other critical areas to the business.

“We want our carrier sales team to be able to focus more on the relationships within our carrier network and less focused on the specific load.”

Tom Curee, Senior Vice President of Strategy

To do that, Kingsgate has aggressive plans for their automation initiatives: The goal is to provide the BOOK NOW option on 90 percent of their loads, allowing them to cover five times the amount of freight in a day.

“We work extremely closely with our clients—we have a number of clients where we manage their entire transportation, every aspect of it,” explained Curee. “Since we know the details of these shipments inside and out, we know right away if an automated booking option is going to make sense for our carriers.”

These ambitious goals are exactly why Kingsgate chose to work with DAT on their automated booking solution. “One of the big things for us was we didn't want to create an environment that was going to put more work on our operations team,” Curee said. “Unfortunately some of the ways that other automated booking solutions have been created requires the users to be in a separate screen that they have to use as a dashboard. That wasn't of interest to us.”

Not only does BOOK NOW give Kingsgate the technical capability, but it reaches carriers in every corner of the continent by leveraging the DAT One network, North America's largest on-demand truckload marketplace.

“The reach that DAT has is key,” confirmed Curee. “Carriers are already comfortable with the platform. They're actively working in it and relying on it to keep their trucks moving, so, the benefit of DAT as a partner for this is huge.”

Those benefits also extend to DAT's data and analytical capabilities. Kingsgate worked closely with the DAT iQ analytics team, which provided technology that allowed for decision-making based on real-time data.

“DAT provided the APIs that let us see how many times a load post has been viewed,” explained Curee. “Say we're getting a significant amount of views on a load but no one is taking it. We can then decide to adjust the rate or date, which provides us with more data and input about our carriers and the freight we're trying to move.”

And like everything else Kingsgate does, it isn't technology for technology's sake. The end goal is always the customers and solving their problems.

“We want to make it easier for our clients to see what's happening behind the scenes,” Curee emphasized. “Transparency is a big piece of what we do. We talk a lot about it internally and with our clients. Some of our biggest projects are around providing more transparency, not just to shippers but to carriers as well, and allowing a better experience for everyone in this journey.”

About DAT

DAT operates the largest truckload freight marketplace in North America. Transportation intermediaries, motor carriers, news organizations and industry analysts rely on DAT for market trends and data insights derived from 183 million freight matches and a database of \$118 billion in annual market transactions. www.DAT.com

About Kingsgate

Kingsgate Logistics is a family-owned, third-party logistics provider founded in 1986. As a non-asset based 3PL, Kingsgate finds ways for businesses to ship freight faster, safer, and smarter, fine-tuning the supply chain with every new shipment so customers can ship confidently. www.kingsgatelogistics.com