



C3 Solutions

Adopting Tech-Centric Yard and Dock Management Strategies

STILL MANAGING YOUR DOCK AND YARD WITH MANUAL, old-school processes? You're not alone. Here's a look at how yard management and dock scheduling systems can help bring your organization out of the dark ages.

INTRODUCTION

Rising transportation costs, the persistent driver shortage, and ongoing capacity crunches are just a few external variables impacting the supply chain and making it difficult for companies to be productive, efficient, *and* profitable. Add the rigors of e-commerce, omni-channel distribution, and changing customer demands to the list and you wind up with an environment that's challenging for even the most seasoned logistics and supply chain professionals.

Focused on getting the right product in the right quantity to the right place at the right time, these professionals know that today's customer demands full transparency into where those deliveries are at all times. While warehouse and transportation management systems can generally answer those questions once physically in the warehouse or during transport, what happens out in the yard or on the DC dock isn't always as transparent.

In fact, these are two areas where clipboards, spreadsheets, 2-way radios, and other manual processes still prevail despite the proliferation of supply chain management software.

Those manual processes are being replaced by automated, integrated solutions that—when combined with WMS, TMS, or enterprise

resource planning (ERP)—effectively close the loop on complete, end-to-end supply chain visibility. By using a yard management system (YMS), for example, companies are able to track and control the movement of trucking assets; optimize labor resources as they move equipment within the yard; manage shipping and receiving dock doors and parking spots; cut driver detention time; and continuously adjust priorities throughout the day according to receiving and shipping volumes. When paired with a dock scheduling solution, these capabilities expand to help organizations maximize the use of their trailers, dock doors, dedicated yard staff, and physical yard space.

To help shipping managers address today's key supply chain concerns and understand how automated solutions can better coordinate and streamline their operations, **Peerless Research Group (PRG)**, on behalf of *Logistics Management* and *Supply Chain Management Review*, conducted a survey for **C3 Solutions, Inc.** Respondents included 38 top corporate supply chain and logistics executives, that are currently working in the retail and wholesale sectors. Focused on how shippers are leveraging technology to improve their freight services, the research concentrated primarily on these companies' yard and dock appointment scheduling operations.

Logistics
MANAGEMENT

SUPPLYCHAIN
MANAGEMENT REVIEW

PRG
PEERLESS RESEARCH GROUP



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“Automation makes
our workers
more efficient.”

Supply Chain Manager;
Retail; \$100M - \$250M in
annual revenues

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Addressing the Major Pain Points

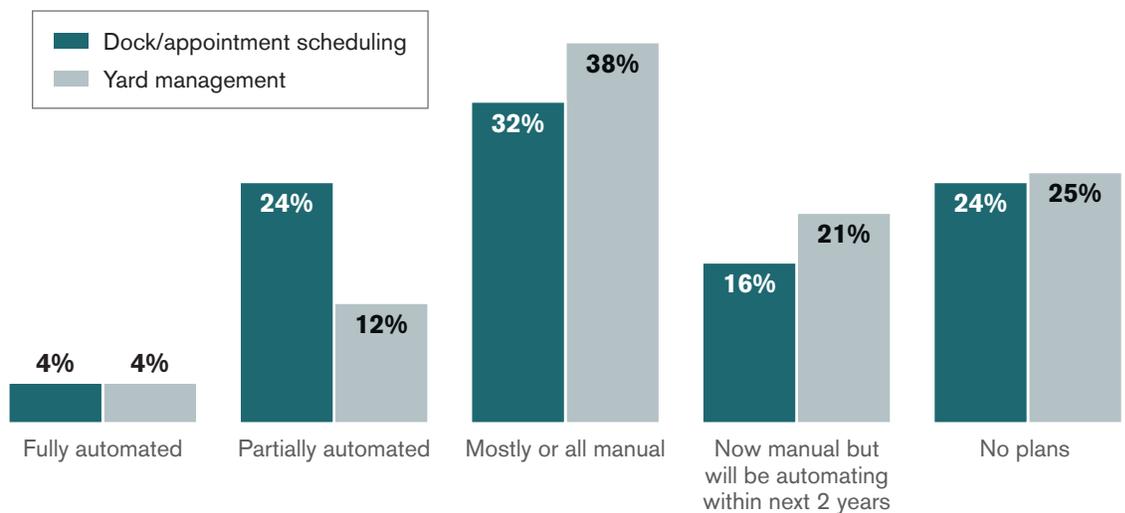
Rising freight costs are a primary concern for supply chain and logistics executives who are also worried about:

- ★ The persistent driver shortages
- ★ Lack of truck capacity
- ★ Being able to get shipments to customers quickly
- ★ Securing carriers
- ★ Becoming shippers of choice for preferred carriers
- ★ Scheduling dock appointments in an efficient and effective manner
- ★ Tracking assets in the yard

To address these problems during the upcoming months, freight operations managers will be focused on gaining better control over costs; reducing shipping errors; improving inventory management and planning; leveraging better analytics; meeting delivery timelines; and refining dock throughput.

When it comes to dock appointment scheduling and yard management, the reviews are mixed on the efficiencies of their current processes. While some shipping executives claim that their operations are highly organized, others admit there’s either room for improvement or that both yard and dock operations need a greater overhaul. Mostly or totally manual for many companies, the yard and dock functions can both create major bottlenecks when they aren’t—at least partially—automated. And in today’s “we want everything delivered yesterday” fulfillment environment, there’s simply no room for oversights.

Level of dock scheduling and yard management automation





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Out in the Yard

When asked whether their yard operations need to be streamlined, most of our survey respondents said “yes.” Drilling down deeper, specific areas that need improvement include driver check-in procedures and trailer utilization metrics—both of which can create significant bottlenecks in the yard.

However, companies that are using YMS in their operations are seeing positive results from their investments. **For example, supply chain managers using YMS have found that overall yard operations are “more accurate” as trailers now show up at the right door and at the right time.** In addition, inventory visibility, planning, and flow-through have all significantly improved. These benefits increase exponentially when wireless technology is added to the mix; at which point communication improves, delivery is more reliable, information on container-loads is more timely, and transference time is abridged.

On the Dock

A notorious “black hole” for companies that are striving for end-to-end supply chain visibility, the loading dock presents unique opportunities to streamline delivery processes.

Organizations that are running automated dock appointment scheduling solutions benefit from better-coordinated loading bays. Other “wins” include improvements to real-time visibility and superior supply chain planning. Further, communication with carriers and suppliers improves significantly as the volume of phone calls and emails is minimized.

When asked which of their dock appointment scheduling tasks need to be upgraded, logistics executives pointed to the quality of communication and connectivity with carriers, suppliers, and brokers as their biggest pain point. They also worry about how to improve dock flexibility and forecasting and realize that facilitating faster procedure times would almost *guarantee* a greater number of deliveries within specific timeframes.

Asked about their use of “drop and hook” programs (i.e., when a driver delivers a load at the final delivery location for a customer and all the driver has to do is drop the trailer and simply pick up a new trailer), shippers are equally split on whether their operations are equipped for this type of set-up. Most companies that aren’t currently providing such platforms do not have plans to establish unload/load terminals.

Room for Improvement

Carriers have the upper hand in today’s capacity-constrained trucking environment, where those carriers are using “rating” systems (and sharing those ratings with one another) as a way to vet those shippers that are difficult to do business with. A company that keeps a truck driver idly waiting for hours before they can unload the trailer, effectively cuts into that operator’s drive time and may wind up costing the carrier money. This and other scenarios must be avoided at all costs if shippers want their offered loads to be considered first (and to be considered seriously).



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“I have a professional relationship with all my carrier representatives with weekly dialog.”

Sr. Manager, Logistics;
Retail; \$500M - \$1B

“We have regular hours, predictable volume, ease of loading and unloading, and clear and respectful communication with the drivers.”

Operations Manager;
Wholesale; \$50M

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Asked to speculate on how they believe their carriers would rate them as a shipping partner, most logistics professionals admit that there is “room for improvement” in this area. Shippers recognize the need to make pickups and deliveries easier for carriers, and they also understand why they have to better organize their yard and facilities for drivers; provide greater transparency on their shipments; and improve the accuracy and timeliness of their freight forecasts.

To better facilitate pickups and deliveries, most companies think communication needs to improve, receiving times should be extended, and—in order to heighten worker efficiency—**more yard and dock processes should be fully automated.**

Most shippers feel that they manage drivers well. Treating drivers respectfully, showing consideration for their time, and making it easy to schedule dock appointments all converge to help improve a shipper’s chances of working with top carriers. To assure access to transportation providers and improve their chances of working with the top carriers, companies are also:

- ★ Paying their invoices in a timely manner
- ★ Reducing driver wait times at the facility
- ★ Treating drivers courteously
- ★ Scheduling pickups in advance
- ★ Using a web portal for scheduling
- ★ Setting conventional dock schedules

Being a “Shipper of Choice”

About one-half of the shippers in our study either currently have a program in place, or are planning to implement practices, to become a preferred shipper, commonly referred to as a “Shipper of Choice.” However, the survey results also highlight a lack of understanding of how being a Shipper of Choice provides a market advantage. To offset this challenge, many shippers are educating their employees about what it takes to be a Shipper of Choice, and why it’s important.

For companies that understand the value of being a Shipper of Choice, attaining this stature helps them compete more effectively in their marketplaces via:

- ★ Cheaper freight rates
- ★ Faster deliveries
- ★ Being an “early call” for availability
- ★ Drivers’ willingness to pull their loads

Using a web-based scheduling portal helps streamline the shipper-carrier relationship, according to most respondents. Using this and other technology tools, truck drivers can be moved through yard and dock activities with greater speed and efficiency.



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“We are friendly,
predictable, and
pay fast.”

Manager, Supply Chain;
Wholesale; \$50M - \$100M

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Conclusion

As the complexities of running domestic and international supply chains increase, and as customers demand faster deliveries and even higher levels of visibility, the dock and yard will play critical roles in the success or failure of these supply chains. The companies that insist on using manual processes to manage this aspect of their distribution operations will face steep challenges, while those that embrace modern, automated technologies will come out ahead.

Focused on meeting customer needs and demands, and all with limited resources, logistics professionals will increasingly be turning to technology to help them do their jobs while maintaining profitability and shoring up the organizational bottom line.

Achieving these goals isn't easy in any business environment, but it's particularly onerous in our e-commerce, omni-channel distribution world. The companies that invest in technology and include their docks and yards in those investment decisions will be best positioned for success now, and well into the future.

Methodology

This research was conducted by **Peerless Research Group** on behalf of *Logistics Management (LM)* and *Supply Chain Management Review (SCMR)* for **C3 Solutions**. This study was executed in September 2018 and was administered via the web to *LM* and *SCMR* magazine subscribers.

Respondents work in the retail or wholesale sectors and are involved in their companies' decisions regarding freight carriers, shipping services, and solutions. In addition, respondents were screened for using truckload or less-than-truckload shipping services.

The survey findings are based on information collected from 38 top corporate and supply chain executives as well as high-level logistics managers. Companies of all size ranges are represented in the findings.

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About C3 Solutions

The C3 Solutions team is dedicated to offer best of breed, mission-critical, enterprise dock scheduling and yard management solutions to its customers.

C3 Solutions' powerful platform allow customers to maximize the usage of their trailers, dock doors, dedicated yard staff, and physical yard space. C3 has gained the confidence of clients around the world and across many industries including retail, grocery, distribution, manufacturing and parcel post.

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