

FOR SHIPPERS

Your customer doesn't know your 3PL's name

Nearly every shipper hands outbound freight, storage and fulfillment to 3PLs, brokers and carriers. There are good reasons to. It lowers cost, it scales, and it buys expertise in compliance, customs and specialized storage such as hazardous materials.

The cost shows up later. You lose operational control, connected systems and a clear view of what happened to your freight. But when an order arrives late or short, your customer calls you, not the 3PL. Detention bills and cargo theft still land on you. You own the customer and the claim, with little view of what caused the problem or how to fix it.

94%

of the Fortune 500 use at least one 3PL, up from about 46% in 2001

~39%

of truckload stops run into detention, an industry cost of \$15B+ a year

~\$725M

in reported cargo theft in 2025, up about 60%, mostly identity fraud

What we see at other shippers

We aren't experts in your operation. These are the problems we run into at other shippers. Check the ones that sound familiar, cross out the ones that don't, and tell us what we've missed.

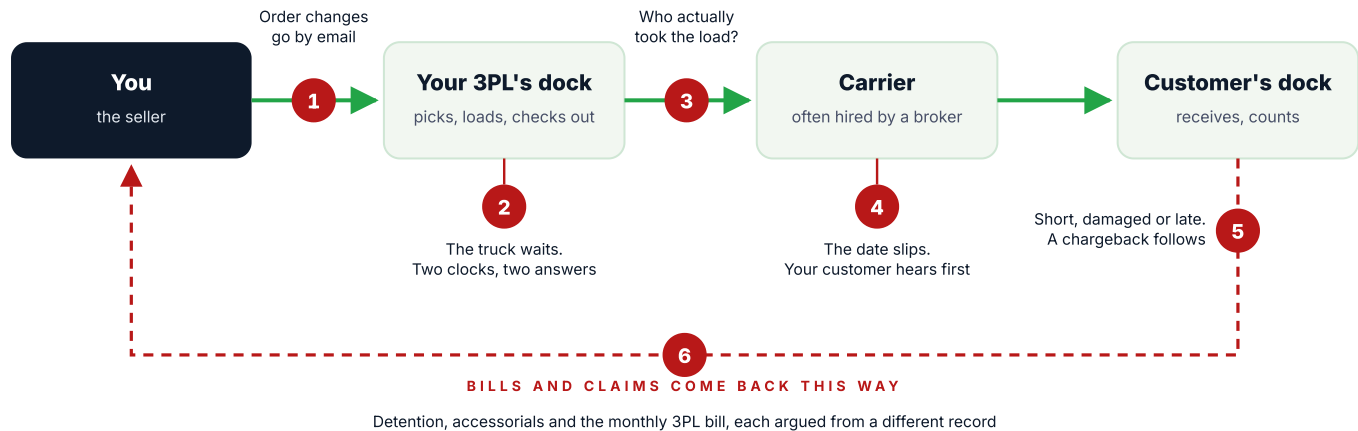
- ☐ A customer asks where an order is, and your sales rep has to make several calls to find out.
- ☐ You hear that a delivery date moved from the customer, not from your partners.
- ☐ Detention bills arrive weeks later, and you have no record of your own to check them against.
- ☐ Every month you and your 3PL reconcile picks, storage and detention from two separate sets of numbers.
- ☐ You know which carrier was booked, but not who actually drove away with the load.
- ☐ Your procedures, such as temperature and seal checks, live in a binder at the 3PL. You find out one was skipped when a claim comes in.
- ☐ The same load gets typed into three systems and a spreadsheet before it ships.

If a few of these fit, the rest of this guide shows where they come from and what changes when the facts are recorded once, at the dock.

HOW IT GOES WRONG

Where disputes start

Follow one order from your sale to your customer's dock. Each company along the way keeps its own record, and the problems show up in the gaps between them. The numbers mark the spots where we see them most.



Draft graphic. Each numbered spot is a place where two companies can keep different versions of the same event.

	WHAT HAPPENS	WHO RECORDS IT TODAY	WHO GETS THE BILL	WHAT DOCK OPTIMIZER RECORDS
1	The order changes after it reaches the 3PL	An email thread, if anyone kept it	Whoever shipped the wrong thing	The order the 3PL works from, pulled from its warehouse system and tied to the dock appointment
2	The truck waits past its free time at pickup	The driver logs one time and the dock's sign-in sheet shows another	Depends on who caused the wait. Often the shipper	Check-in and check-out times at the dock, with free time applied and the hours and rate itemized
3	Someone other than the booked carrier picks up	A signature on the bill of lading	The shipper, through the claim	A driver ID check and the carrier's MC and USDOT numbers, at check-in
4	The delivery date moves	A phone call from carrier to broker, maybe passed on	Nobody, until the customer relationship pays	The load's current dates and, where the carrier shares it, its location
5	The load arrives short or damaged	The receiver's notes, weeks later	The shipper, as a chargeback	Photos and checklist answers from loading, timestamped at the origin dock
6	The bills come in	Each side's own spreadsheet	Whoever loses the argument	One dock record both sides can read, with the 3PL's consent

Why one record holds up in a dispute

Each company writes down only what it did. The 3PL records when the truck left its dock. The carrier records where the truck is. You record what you sold. Nobody can edit another company's entries. So when a detention bill is disputed, both sides are looking at the same check-in and check-out times instead of two spreadsheets.

EXAMPLE ONE

A steel service center sells to a truck maker

A LIVE PROGRAM

The participants are under LOI with Conmitto, so we describe them here rather than name them. We're glad to walk through it on a call.

A mid-market steel service center, owned by a private equity group, sells coil to a global truck maker's plants. It ships from its own dock, and a small trucking company with broker authority hauls the loads with owner-operators it works with.

BEFORE

The truck maker runs its own appointment system and penalizes suppliers who don't keep it current. Delivery dates depend on dock times at the processors the service center buys from. Each load was typed into several systems, and a spreadsheet of skid-level weights went by email to the plant's guard shack, because the plant's yard system needs more detail than the appointment system holds. Date changes traveled by phone. When the truck maker asked where an order was, the sales rep had to call around. The truck maker doesn't care whose driver was late. To the truck maker, the service center was late.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW	WHO	WHAT EVERYONE ELSE SEES
The truck maker sends a purchase order as a PDF	Buyer	Nothing yet
The service center turns that PDF into a sales order, with customer, PO number and lines filled in for the desk to check	Seller	The truck maker's PO shows as confirmed by the supplier
A load is booked with a pickup time at the service center's dock and the plant's delivery time	Seller, as shipper	The broker sees an offer carrying both dock times
The broker wins it and assigns a driver	Broker	The driver's phone shows both times and the reference numbers
The truck leaves the service center's dock	Service center	The order moves to shipped on its own. The truck maker's order reads as on its way
The truck is unloaded at the plant	Buyer	The service center sees the delivery

The goal, and what hasn't changed yet. The program aims to cut the manual work on each load from about an hour to around 15 minutes. The truck maker's own appointment system still has to be kept up to date, and getting the processors onto dock scheduling is the next step toward that goal.

The catch most shippers never see

When a company with broker-only authority gives a load to an owner-operator, that is brokering, whatever the rate confirmation calls it. If your rate confirmation forbids re-tendering without written consent, Dock Optimizer asks the broker to stop and confirm before a driver goes on the load under a carrier with no authority of its own.

Why the owners care

Private equity groups like this approach because it turns operational efficiency into something they can measure, and it centralizes freight relationships and purchasing across the companies they own.

EXAMPLE TWO

A food brand ships from a 3PL building

Now picture the setup most large shippers live in. A food brand sells cases to a national retailer. A 3PL stores the brand's product and ships the retailer's orders from its own dock. The brand sells the goods, and a different company loads them.

BEFORE

The brand sees what the 3PL reports, when it reports it. Each month the two companies reconcile picks, storage and detention from separate records, and when a building is overloaded with one client's work, the detention it causes can be passed back to that client. The retailer's chargeback for a short shipment arrives weeks later, and the brand has to work out from someone else's records whether it was fair.

Now. The brand keeps its own account and its own sales orders. The 3PL's facts come from the dock: what was picked, what went into each pallet, which carrier took it and when the truck checked out. When the truck leaves, the brand's order moves to shipped. The 3PL writes its facts, and the brand reads them.

	STEEL SERVICE CENTER	FOOD BRAND AT A 3PL
Who sells	The service center	The food brand
Who buys	The truck maker, on Dock Optimizer	The national retailer, on EDI
Who runs the dock	The service center	The 3PL
How the order reaches the dock	The seller's own sales order	The brand's orders land in the 3PL's warehouse system, and Dock Optimizer pulls them in

A buyer on EDI hears differently, but the facts are the same. A buyer on Dock Optimizer sees its purchase order move. A buyer on EDI gets a ship notice. Both come from the same moment at the dock. Sending those EDI messages from the dock facts is in development now.

WHY PULL ONCE

Many setups put an EDI integrator between the warehouse system and each retailer, and it queries the warehouse system for every message. At a busy 3PL, one client's integrator can slow the building down for everyone. Dock Optimizer pulls on a schedule, stores what it learns once, and builds every record from that. Adding a retailer adds messages, not load.

Mistakes that look fine on screen

THE MISTAKE	WHY IT LOOKS FINE	WHAT IT COSTS YOU
Two ship notices go out for one shipment	Each one is valid	Receiving shows a discrepancy, which at many retailers means a chargeback
The 3PL invoices your retailer	Its system holds a price	The invoice is your claim for payment, at your price
The 3PL keeps your orders as its own sales	Every field copies over correctly	Your invoicing runs on someone else's record
Your customer marks your order shipped	It can see the truck	Your invoice starts on the customer's say-so

WHAT A SHIPPER GETS**One view and one audit log across your partners' systems**

With more of the work handled by 3PLs, Dock Optimizer gives you visibility and an audit log across the separate systems in your supply chain.

- **One record per order.** From the purchase order to the truck leaving the dock, across your own sites and your 3PLs.
- **Your procedures, enforced at the dock.** Check-in and checkout steps, including temperature and condition checks, run the same way in every building and leave a timestamped trail.
- **Verified drivers.** Driver ID checks and carrier MC and USDOT lookups at check-in, the link most fraud defenses skip.
- **Detention you can check.** Dwell from check-in to check-out, free time applied, hours and rate shown line by line.
- **Carrier performance.** No-shows, dwell and on-time, by carrier and by facility.
- **Works with what partners already run.** WMS feeds such as SphereWMS, EDI, project44 and FourKites visibility, and a live export to Power BI.

Screenshot to add:
carrier performance table

No-show, dwell and on-time by carrier.

Screenshot to add:
multi-facility calendar

Every building's docks in one view.

If you need to make the case internally

You may have to explain this to someone who wasn't in the room. Feel free to borrow this:

When we moved work to 3PLs we gained cost and scale, and we gave up our own record of what happens at the dock. Today our detention charges, missed shipments and chargebacks are measured by our partners, not by us. A shared dock record lets us check those charges, see which carriers and buildings cause them, and fix the cause. We can start with one building or one lane.

What we ask of your partners

Very little. Your 3PLs get a booking link at their docks, and carriers book without accounts or apps. A facility's data reaches a trading partner only with that facility's explicit, revocable consent, so this is something you do with your 3PLs, never behind their backs.

Many of them already know it. Teams from RXO, J.B. Hunt, Kuehne+Nagel, DHL, C.H. Robinson, Ryan Transportation, Forward Air and Uber Freight book freight into Dock Optimizer docks today, and Hanzo Logistics runs all seven of its Indianapolis buildings on it.

START SMALL

Most shippers start with one lane or one building and grow from there. See the booking experience in sixty seconds at dockoptimizer.com/book/conmitto, or book time with us at calendly.com/dockoptimizer/intro. Questions go to support@conmitto.io.

Sources: Armstrong & Associates; industry detention and cargo theft data, as collected in The Physical Economy field guide at dockoptimizer.com/field-guide.