



HOW TO FORGE A CARRIER-SHIPPER RELATIONSHIP THAT WORKS

Savvy shippers are using today's challenging high-value freight environment to carefully evaluate their transportation and logistics providers. Consider these questions to ensure the carrier you choose will be with you for the long haul.

In today's uncertain freight market, building strong shipper-carrier relationships is critical for success. And while price is never far from the forefront, the [2023 State of Transportation](#) study from Breakthrough shows healthy supply chain relationships are a pressing concern for many in the transportation industry. Even with the pressure for shippers to reign in costs, 70% of transportation executives responding to the study said strengthening mutually beneficial transportation contracts with current providers is a key focus area.

For shippers without strong transportation and logistics providers, the current soft freight environment offers opportunities to reevaluate carrier relationships. It's important to look for a shipping solution provider committed to creating a roadmap for success addressing every transportation need. This carrier should communicate clearly, prioritize reliability, embrace new technology and value sustainability, all while meeting your business goals and objectives.

Below are key questions to consider while vetting a potential transportation and logistics provider.

Are they good communicators?

Communication is vital to a shipper-carrier relationship.

"Open and clear communication aligns expectations, addresses issues before they become problems and streamlines operations," says Craig Callahan, EVP and Chief Commercial Officer at Werner.

Callahan says giving both parties access to the same data points is key. Werner provides this visibility through its Werner EDGE® TMS, which provides real-time analytics and routing information to its shipper customers.

When working with Werner®, "shippers may expect personalized attention, responsive communication and dedicated support from our team," Callahan says.

Strengthening mutually beneficial transportation contracts with current providers is a key focus area for more than 70% of transportation leaders.

[Breakthrough 2023 State of Transportation Study](#)

Can you depend on them?

When you turn over your freight to a carrier, you trust those materials will arrive at their destination safely, securely and on time. "Evaluating a carrier's track record, on-time delivery rates and performance metrics can help assess reliability," Callahan advises.

Consider a carrier's capacity and flexibility to meet your transportation needs, especially during peak seasons or unexpected surges in demand. "A carrier with a diverse fleet, extensive network coverage and flexible service offerings can better adapt to fluctuating market conditions and support evolving supply chain requirements," Callahan says.

Specifically, look for carriers that invest in quality and dependability. Even in today's challenging freight environment, Werner has "prioritized fleet modernization by reducing the average age of our fleet, ensuring it remains safe, reliable and fuel-efficient," Callahan says.

Werner's average truck age is two years, well below the industry average, and a recent move to bring maintenance in-house was designed to improve operational efficiency.

Dedication to safety is also key, Callahan says. To help mitigate risks and ensure regulatory compliance throughout the transportation process, shippers must evaluate a carrier's safety record, regulatory compliance history and commitment to sustainability.

In 2023, Werner® achieved a 19-year low in its DOT preventable accident rate. "Shippers can trust Werner to deliver their goods on time and safely, even in challenging market conditions," Callahan says.

Are they tech savvy?

Technology plays a crucial role in optimizing the supply chain. Seek out carriers with a strong commitment to innovation using the latest technologies to enhance transportation and logistics needs. "Werner invests in cutting-edge technology and innovation to enhance its logistics capabilities," Callahan says. "Shippers may benefit from Werner's advanced tracking systems and real-time visibility and analytics tools, which may improve supply chain efficiency, optimize routing and provide valuable insights into shipment status and performance."

Technology also extends to the professional driver in the cab. All Werner trucks are equipped with the latest technologies, including GPS tracking, collision mitigation, auto manual transmissions, forward-facing cameras and a tablet-based telematics solution supporting a safer and more efficient driver experience.

Another important area of technology is predictive analytics, which enables you to forecast demand, identify potential disruptions and proactively address issues before they escalate, leading to smoother operations and improved service levels.

You can also use analytics to examine historical data and trends to pinpoint cost-saving opportunities and improve efficiency.



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Craig Callahan
EVP and CCO - Werner

Do they strive for sustainability?

Complying with changing emissions regulations and combating climate change are shared goals of many successful shippers and carriers, largely driven by consumer preferences. In fact, nearly 94% of transportation professionals surveyed in the Breakthrough State of Transportation study say consumer demand for more sustainable products makes reducing emissions a top priority for the following year.

“There is a growing focus on sustainability and environmental responsibility in the trucking industry, driven by both regulatory requirements and customer preferences,” Callahan says. “As a leader in sustainability, Werner is continually monitoring its environmental performance,” he says.

Carriers committed to improving their sustainability and environmental impact invest in fuel-efficient vehicles, alternative fuels and emissions-reduction technologies. Running late-model trucks is also important, as older trucks can produce as much as 60 times the emissions of newer vehicles, he says.

Smart management of equipment and routes can also affect sustainability goals. “Carriers can use strategies such as backhauling and collaborative shipping arrangements to optimize routing and reduce empty miles, minimizing their carbon footprint and offering greener transportation options to customers,” Callahan says.

If you are concerned about driving down Scope 3 emissions – those generated from the supply chain – an intermodal solution could serve as one of the many offerings available. “We are aligned with the railroads and are excited about the new service offerings they have released,” he says. “Improved railroad service performance makes this option way more viable today than in the past.”

And if your company is among many focused on shortening supply chains, consider finding carriers that have cross-border expertise and capabilities. “At Werner, we have local expertise throughout Mexico and Canada, including bilingual customer service and sales staff, to facilitate successful cross-border freight movements,” Callahan, says, noting that Werner’s expertise in Mexico dates back 25 years.

Will they go the extra mile?

Every shipper has their own set of unique needs. The best carriers can identify those needs and help you reach your goals.

“Despite being a large carrier, we can still be flexible and meet customers where they are,” Callahan says.

In some cases, that may mean creating specialized shipping and distribution models. As an example, Callahan says Werner services two of the nation’s largest discount retailers with several large fleets dedicated to their operations. They operate in a dedicated model, completing distribution-center-to-store movements that are usually multistop before returning to the distribution center. He says they service those operations with professional drivers who physically unload and fingerprint the product at each stop.



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Craig Callahan
EVP and CCO - Werner

"Werner goes the extra mile in helping customers improve efficiencies and lower costs," Callahan says.

The current soft freight environment presents an opportunity for shippers to reevaluate their current carrier relationships. Taking the time to find a logistics provider that communicates well, provides dependable service, uses the latest technology, prioritizes sustainability, and has the scale and flexibility to meet your unique needs will set you up for success – now and for years to come.



Consider the Value of Premium Services

Werner's Premium Services delivers a comprehensive solution tailored to industries with unique needs and provides critical benefits:

Unmatched On-Time Delivery

Werner prioritizes delivering goods safely and on-time to reduce costly delays.

Dedicated Operational Teams

24/7 coverage ensures shipments receive the attention they deserve, regardless of the time or day.

Specialized Equipment Options

From flatbeds to reefers, Werner has the right equipment to handle specific cargo requirements.

Risk Mitigation

With Werner assuming the risks associated with high-value freight, you can focus on your core business.

Tailored Expedited Solutions

Expedited services meets the most demanding timelines, ensuring shipments arrive on time every time.

Experienced Driver Teams

The Werner network of more than 600 dedicated professional driver teams provides safe and efficient transportation.