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RESEARCH

Benefit case study: DAT enables \$1.5M in cost savings for Henkel

ANALYST

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The Bottom Line

Henkel, a global consumer goods and industrial manufacturer operating multiple supply chains across North America, deployed DAT iQ to strengthen its freight procurement strategy and gain external market validation for transportation rates. Before DAT, procurement teams lacked a reliable benchmark for contract negotiations and struggled to align freight budgets with shifting market conditions. By expanding its use of the DAT iQ platform, Henkel standardized rate benchmarking, introduced a gain-share/pain-share carrier model, and leveraged DAT's forecasting tools to set defensible rate targets and conduct mid-year volume reviews. These capabilities enabled the organization to achieve approximately \$1.5M in annual cost avoidance, improve negotiation accuracy, and reduce exposure to volatility. Henkel also noted that ongoing engagement with DAT's team, not treating the platform as a static tool, was a key best practice, ensuring its sourcing strategy remained aligned with market shifts and supported continuous value capture across its transportation network.

The company

Henkel is a global manufacturing and consumer goods company with a strong European heritage and a diversified North American footprint. The organization operates two major business divisions and manages three separate supply chains across the region, supporting consumer brands, professional hair care products, and industrial adhesive technologies. Its North American logistics procurement team oversees domestic and international freight, manages 3PL partnerships, and leads business services such as fuel recovery. This team is responsible for transportation contracting and sourcing strategy, making freight cost visibility and carrier performance benchmarking central to its operational priorities.

Henkel manages multiple consumer and industrial brands supported by three North American supply chains, requiring precise control over transportation sourcing and carrier relationships.

The challenges

Before its current deployment of DAT, Henkel lacked a unified and objective source of transportation market intelligence. Internal stakeholders struggled to validate freight rates, negotiate effectively with carriers, or determine whether existing contract terms reflected true market conditions. The organization's previous benchmarking environment did not provide enough historical depth or peer comparison context to support long-term freight planning across its diverse portfolio. As market volatility increased, leadership needed a data-backed method to evaluate transportation spend, justify sourcing decisions, and predict how rate fluctuations could affect multi-year contracts and service levels. These limitations drove Henkel to reassess its analytics investments and seek a platform capable of providing deeper benchmarking, forecasting, and procurement insight.

The strategy

Henkel reevaluated the freight analytics market and considered alternatives such as SONAR by FreightWaves, Uber Freight, Breakthrough Fuel, TruckStop, and several emerging providers. DAT was ultimately retained due to its long-standing credibility across shippers, brokers, and carriers, its ease of use, and its strong alignment with procurement workflows. The organization also viewed DAT's continued product development as a strategic advantage, ensuring compatibility with its long-term digital roadmap for transportation decision support. Henkel expanded from using DAT's original benchmarking tools to adopting broader market intelligence within the DAT iQ platform, enabling more sophisticated analysis of rate trends and peer performance. The logistics team incorporated DAT data into

Henkel struggled to maintain reliable visibility into freight performance and market pricing across business units, creating gaps in budgeting accuracy, sourcing alignment, and rate justification.

a “gain-share, pain-share” contract model designed to hedge market shifts, ensure equitable pricing, and structure 12-month agreements with mid-year rate and volume reviews — a key component of Henkel’s advanced procurement strategy.

Benefits realized

Through end-user conversations, Nucleus identified the main benefits Henkel realized when utilizing DAT:

Reduced transportation costs

Henkel used DAT’s benchmarking and peer comparison capabilities to anchor carrier negotiations in objective market data, replacing subjective or carrier-provided rate assumptions. By grounding discussions in lane-level benchmarks, volume trends, and service profiles, the procurement team secured more defensible contract positions and achieved approximately \$1.5M in cost savings over the past year. DAT also provided the market guardrails used to set target rates during RFPs, ensuring that final awards aligned with broader pricing norms rather than historical spend alone.

Improved contract flexibility

The organization leveraged DAT’s market intelligence to design a “gain-share, pain-share” contracting structure that incorporates mid-year rate and volume reviews. With DAT’s visibility into market direction, Henkel can adjust pricing frameworks when conditions tighten or loosen, protecting itself from overpaying during downturns while enabling clawbacks when rates fall. This dynamic contracting model helped the logistics team hedge volatility rather than react to it, a capability that was not feasible prior to leveraging DAT’s forecasting and trend analytics.

Enhanced budgeting

Henkel’s logistics procurement team uses DAT’s forecasting tools to align annual and long-term transportation budgets with expected market movement, reducing the guesswork inherent in prior budgeting cycles. DAT’s forward-looking insights into cost direction give finance and logistics leaders a common reference point for budget assumptions, improving predictability and reducing the risk of wide variances between planned and actual transportation spend. As a result, executive stakeholders have greater confidence in the logistics organization’s sourcing decisions and cost projections.

Henkel used DAT’s benchmarking and peer comparison capabilities to negotiate more flexible 12-month freight contracts.

Henkel achieved approximately \$1.5M in cost savings by leveraging DAT data to validate carrier rates, assess volume trends, and proactively renegotiate pricing as market conditions shifted.

Lessons learned

Henkel's experience underscores that the greatest value from DAT is realized when organizations treat the platform as an active component of their procurement and transportation strategy rather than a static data repository. The logistics team found that establishing a regular governance cadence with DAT, ideally every four to six weeks, helped ensure alignment between market developments, account priorities, and new product capabilities. These check-ins allowed stakeholders to stay current on carrier and broker-side dynamics and maximize the utility of emerging features.

Another key lesson learned was the importance of periodically reviewing how internal data is aggregated and mapped within DAT's framework. By validating interpretation rules and the classifications applied to spot versus contract freight, Henkel ensured that benchmarking results remained accurate and meaningful over time. Finally, Henkel advises other shippers to make full use of DAT's account teams and expertise. Engaging proactively with DAT representatives provided early insight into rate shifts and enabled more informed bid strategies, helping the logistics team move from reactive contract adjustments to a more anticipatory sourcing posture.

Henkel recommends establishing a recurring governance and review cadence with DAT account teams to maximize value, continuously refine data inputs.