



Freight & Analytics

Your Future is Built on Trust

**A broker's guide to
carrier relationships**

Table of Contents

3 Introduction

4 Back to basics: Trust

5 The problem with vetting ‘the way we always have’

8 The five pillars of modern carrier relationship management

- 9 Pillar 1: Proactive vetting, not reactive risk management
- 11 Pillar 2: The power of a single source of truth
- 13 Pillar 3: Efficiency is your competitive advantage
- 15 Pillar 4: Moving from transactions to partnerships
- 17 Pillar 5: Freight moves on confidence

19 Your future is built on trust

At the end of the day, everything we do relies on a foundation of trust.

Who you work with, in many ways, ends up defining your business. Trusted partners propel you forward; underperforming partners weigh you down. The strength of your network is often lockstep with the strength of your business. It very literally pays to know who you're working with.

**To put a fine point on it:
Carrier relationships can
make or break a brokerage.**

Traditional carrier network management methods, full of manual processes, disconnected systems, and reactive risk management, can't cut it anymore. Brokers who rely on these outdated approaches face mounting challenges: wasted time spent managing unqualified inquiries, costly inefficiencies from juggling multiple third-party tools, and compliance risks stemming from inadequate vetting procedures.

In the modern brokerage world, all of those challenges are optional. You don't have to wade through all of that.

Brokers that implement proactive vetting strategies, establish single sources of truth for carrier information, and leverage technology to streamline processes can create sustainable, simple, and competitive advantages. Your life is easier, and your brokerage's P&L will thank you.

Here, we'll cover the five pillars that form the foundation of successful carrier relationships: 1) proactive vetting over reactive risk management, 2) centralized information management, 3) operational efficiency as a competitive differentiator, 4) the evolution from transactions to partnerships, and 5) the confidence that comes from working with trusted capacity.

Together, these pillars demonstrate how modern carrier management solutions can transform broker operations and drive long-term business success.

Back to basics: Trust



Every morning, freight brokers across the country face the same fundamental challenge: moving goods safely, efficiently, and profitably while managing an increasingly complex web of carrier relationships.

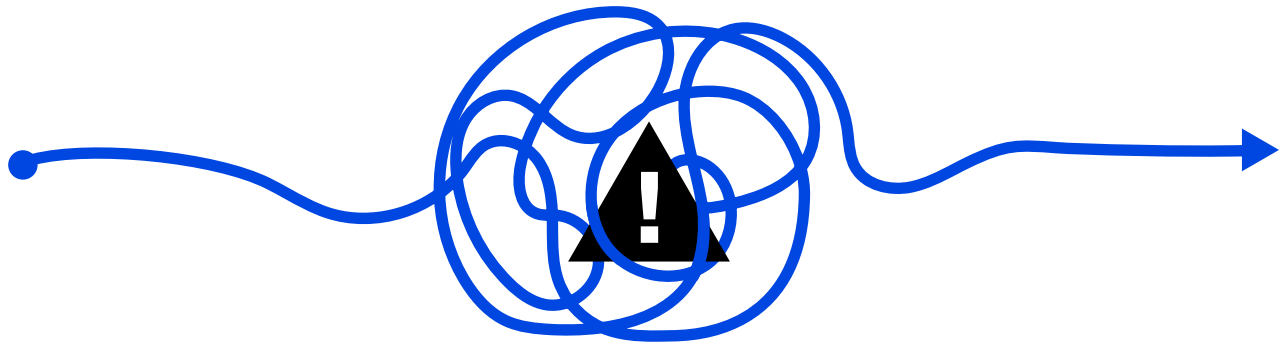
The pressure is constant and multifaceted: tight delivery windows, fluctuating capacity, regulatory compliance requirements, and the ever-present question of who you're working with.

Forward-thinking brokers understand that every interaction with a carrier is an opportunity to build trust, demonstrate professionalism, and create the foundation for long-term partnerships that benefit both parties.

In an industry built on trust, your carrier relationships represent your most valuable business asset. The brokers who recognize this reality and invest in building strong, transparent, and mutually beneficial partnerships will be positioned for long-term success in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

The problem with vetting ‘the way we always have’

Old approaches to vetting, manual procedures, reactive risk management, disconnected systems and all, are now creating more problems than they solve.



The traditional carrier vetting process typically begins with a phone call or email inquiry from a potential carrier. This initial contact triggers a time-intensive manual workflow that requires significant administrative resources. Brokers must

collect basic company information, request documentation such as insurance certificates and operating authority, verify credentials through various government databases, and conduct phone interviews to assess carrier capabilities and reliability.

A typical vetting process can take several hours spread across multiple days, as brokers wait for document submissions, conduct verification calls, and coordinate with various stakeholders.

When multiplied across dozens or hundreds of carrier inquiries, the cumulative time investment becomes enormous.

The process becomes even more cumbersome when brokers must chase down missing or incomplete paperwork. Carriers often submit outdated insurance certificates, fail to provide required endorsements, or submit illegible faxed documents that must be clarified through additional communications. Each missing piece of documentation triggers another round of outreach, creating delays and frustration for both parties.



Perhaps most problematically, traditional vetting processes require brokers to bounce between multiple systems and platforms.

Verifying operating authority might require checking Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration databases, insurance verification involves contacting carriers' insurance providers, safety ratings must be researched through separate safety management systems, and financial verification might require credit checks through third-party services.

This system-jumping creates multiple points of failure and increases the likelihood of errors. Data must be manually transferred between platforms, increasing the risk of transcription mistakes. Information becomes fragmented across various systems, making it difficult to maintain comprehensive carrier profiles. Updates to carrier information must be manually propagated across multiple platforms, creating opportunities for inconsistencies.

**You get the picture: It's an absolute chore
with many inefficiencies and points of failure.
And worse still – it can get expensive.**

The cost implications of these traditional approaches extend far beyond the direct labor costs of manual vetting activities. Licensing multiple third-party tools for different aspects of carrier management creates ongoing subscription expenses. Training staff to use multiple systems requires significant time investment. The administrative overhead of maintaining vendor relationships with multiple service providers adds complexity and cost to operations.

Cost isn't always relegated to money. Opportunity costs can be difficult to quantify but are substantial nonetheless. Time spent on manual vetting activities is time not spent on revenue-generating activities like business development, customer service, or strategic planning.



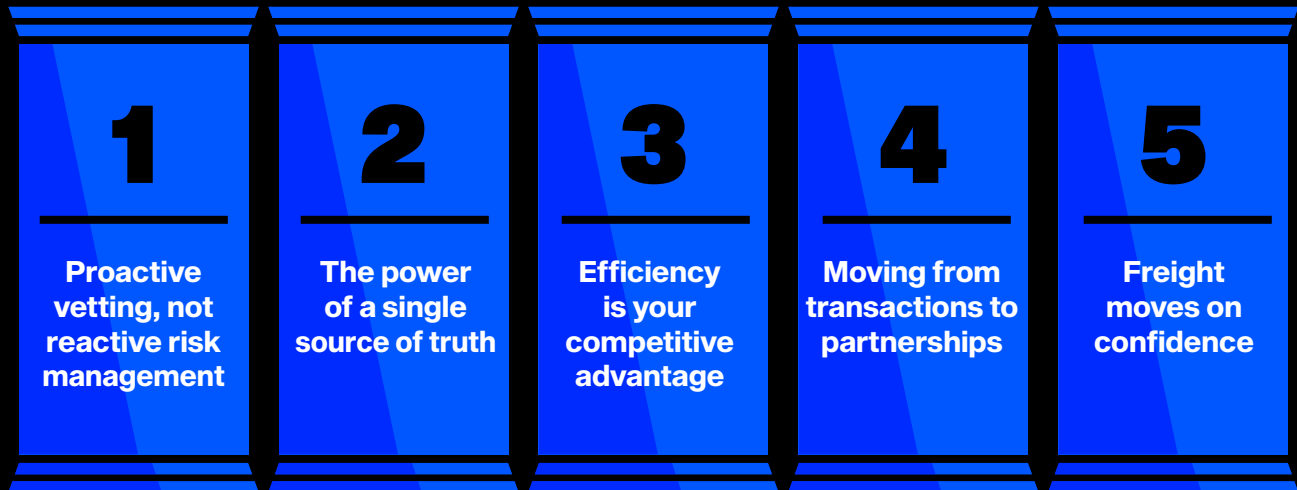
**Outdated vetting methods
puts brokers at a significant
disadvantage.**



**The businesses that thrive in
today's market are those that
embrace modern approaches
to carrier relationship
management and prioritize
efficiency, accuracy, and
proactive risk management.**

5

Pillars of modern carrier relationship management



There's a better way to do things

Modern vetting is proactive, centralized, efficient, relationship-based, and thus, confident. When built correctly, strong carrier relationships serve as force multipliers, enabling brokers to operate more efficiently, reduce risks, and capitalize on market opportunities that would otherwise be missed. These five pillars demonstrate how strategic approaches to carrier relationship management create sustainable competitive advantages.

PILLAR 1:

Proactive vetting, not reactive risk management



The first pillar of successful carrier relationship management involves fundamentally shifting from reactive, last-minute carrier checks to continuous, proactive vetting strategies.

This transformation represents one of the most significant operational improvements brokers can make to enhance both efficiency and risk management.

Traditional reactive vetting occurs when brokers need capacity quickly and must rush through carrier verification processes under time pressure. This approach virtually guarantees that corners will be cut, critical checks will be overlooked, and suboptimal carriers will be used simply because they are available when needed. The reactive approach also means that brokers are constantly operating in crisis mode, scrambling to find and verify carriers when freight needs to move immediately.

Proactive vetting, by contrast, involves continuously building and maintaining a network of pre-qualified carriers who have already been thoroughly vetted and approved for use. This approach allows brokers to conduct comprehensive verification activities without time pressure, ensuring that all necessary checks are completed properly and that carrier information is current and accurate.

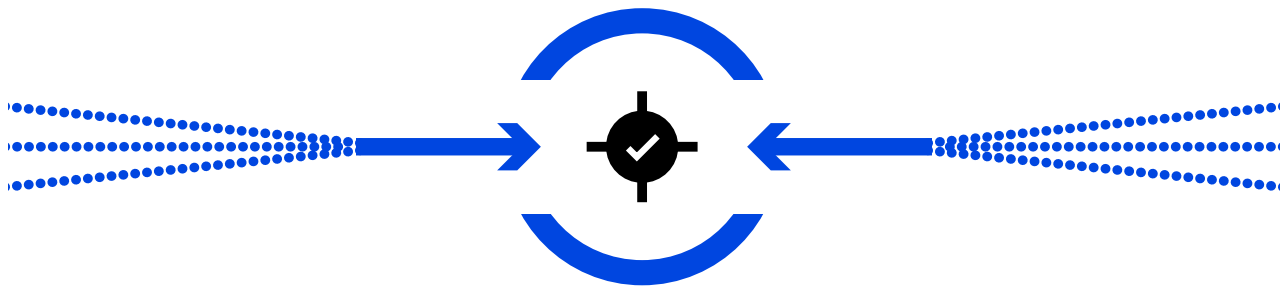
Modern carrier management solutions, like DAT's Qualification Settings, have made proactive vetting significantly more efficient and effective than traditional approaches.

You can qualify carriers based on your requirements and get instant access to critical details like authority information, insurance, crash and safety data, tracking via Trucker Tools, factoring confirmation, and more, all within DAT One.

The integration of multiple data sources into single platforms eliminates the need to bounce between different systems during vetting activities. Brokers can access Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration data, insurance verification, safety ratings, and financial information from one interface, dramatically reducing the time required to complete carrier qualification activities.

PILLAR 2:

The power of a single source of truth



The second pillar of strong carrier relationships centers on consolidating carrier information into comprehensive, centralized profiles that serve as authoritative sources of truth for all carrier-related decisions.

The goal here is to build a one-stop shop for information that lets you take one look – not multiple – before choosing a carrier to add to your network. This consolidation addresses one of the most significant operational challenges facing modern

brokers: managing carrier information across multiple disconnected systems and databases. That's the ethos behind why we made Company Profiles within DAT One. One screen, one source of information, less time spent compiling it all.

Traditional carrier management approaches often result in fragmented information scattered across various platforms, spreadsheets, and filing systems. Basic company information might be stored in a transportation management system, insurance certificates might be filed in a document management system, safety ratings might be tracked in a separate compliance database, and performance metrics might be maintained in yet another system. This fragmentation creates multiple problems that undermine operational efficiency and increase risks.

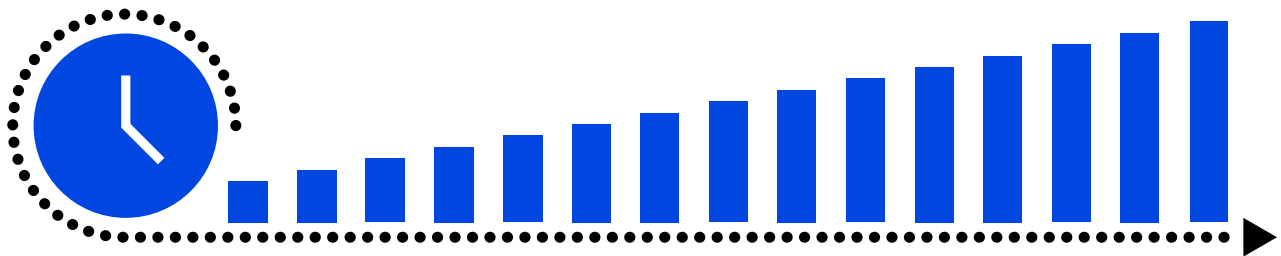
When carrier information is scattered across multiple systems, maintaining accuracy becomes extremely difficult. Updates to carrier information must be manually propagated across all relevant platforms, creating opportunities for inconsistencies and errors. Different systems may contain conflicting information about the same carrier, making it difficult for staff to know which information is current and accurate.

The fragmentation also makes it difficult to develop comprehensive views of carrier performance and capabilities. Evaluating a carrier's suitability for a particular load might require gathering information from multiple systems, synthesizing data from various sources, and making decisions based on incomplete pictures of carrier capabilities.

Centralized carrier profiles eliminate these problems by creating comprehensive, authoritative sources of carrier information that can be accessed by all relevant stakeholders within their existing systems, whether it's DAT One or an integration with their current TMS. It's simpler, more cohesive, and eliminates common roadblocks.

PILLAR 3:

Efficiency is your competitive advantage



Getting efficient with carrier management directly translates to competitive advantages in the marketplace. Margins are tight and speed-to-market can determine success or failure.

Streamlined carrier management processes enable brokers to respond more quickly to opportunities and operate more profitably than competitors using traditional approaches. We built Qualification Settings in DAT One to

reduce the time it takes to get to market. You'll get fast searches and load posts, and quickly find trusted and verified capacity that meet your company's specific criteria.

When brokers can quickly identify and deploy appropriate carriers for specific loads, they can respond to customer requests faster than competitors who must conduct lengthy search and vetting processes. This responsiveness can be the difference between winning and losing valuable business, particularly for time-sensitive shipments or during peak demand periods.

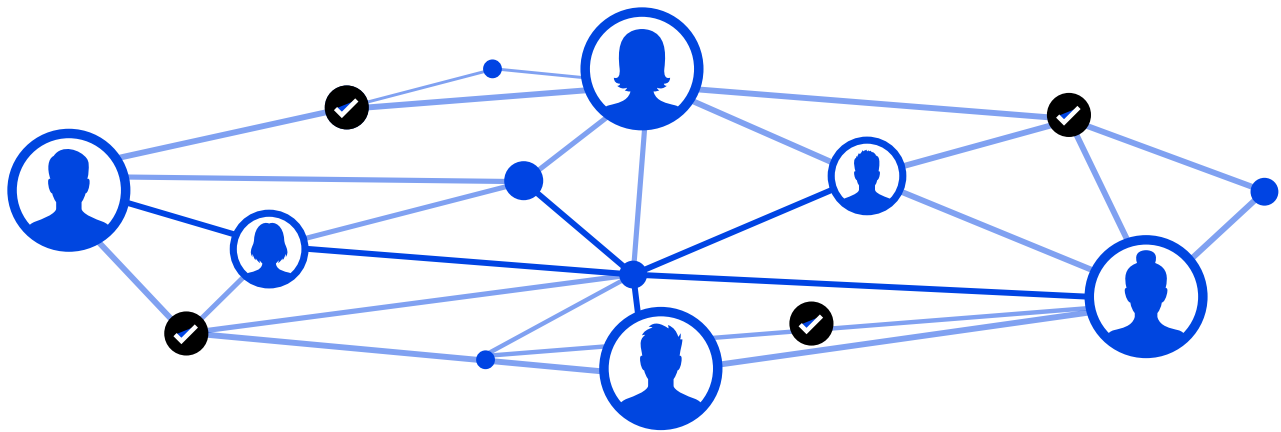
The time savings also enable brokers to handle larger volumes of business without proportional increases in staffing. It can grow their business without growing their back office. Automated carrier qualification processes that used to require hours of manual work can be completed in minutes, freeing staff to focus on higher-value activities like relationship building, business development, and customer service.

With DAT's Qualification Settings, rather than manually reviewing long lists of potential carriers and conducting individual evaluations, brokers can use automated preferences to quickly identify carriers that meet specific criteria for loads.

The benefits of saving all this time compounds. Brokers who can consistently respond more quickly to customer requests, maintain higher service levels, and operate more profitably than competitors will gradually capture increased market share and build stronger customer relationships.

PILLAR 4:

Moving from transactions to partnerships



Traditional approaches to carrier relationships focus primarily on immediate needs: finding available capacity for specific loads, negotiating rates for individual shipments, and managing basic operational requirements. While these activities are necessary, they may not capture the significant value that can be created through deeper partnerships.

Partnership-oriented approaches recognize that carriers are strategic assets whose capabilities, reliability, and commitment can be developed and enhanced over time.

Rather than simply using carriers to move freight, partnership-focused brokers invest in understanding carrier business objectives, operational challenges, and growth aspirations, then look for ways to align their business activities to support mutual success. These partnerships bring stability, predictability, and trust to your businesses' future.

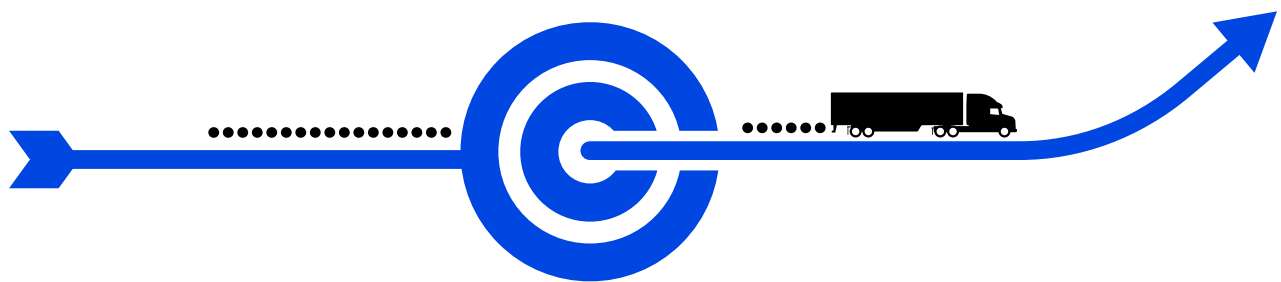
But it requires a different strategy: Consistent communication and transparency between brokers and carriers. Rather than communicating only when loads need to be covered, partnership-focused brokers maintain regular contact with key carriers to understand their operational

status, capacity availability, and business developments. This ongoing communication enables brokers to plan more effectively and helps carriers understand demand patterns and expectations.

Long-term partnerships also provide brokers with more predictable access to capacity. Carriers who view brokers as strategic partners are more likely to reserve capacity for those relationships and provide advance notice of availability changes. This predictability enables brokers to make more confident commitments to customers and plan operations more effectively.

PILLAR 5:

Freight moves on confidence



The fifth and final pillar includes the four that we've already mentioned to create one key understanding: strong carrier relationships enable brokers to operate with confidence in all aspects of their business.

When proactive vetting, centralized information, operational efficiency, and partnership approaches are combined, they create an operational foundation that enables sure-footed decision-making and consistent service delivery.

Trusted carrier relationships translate directly to confidence in customer commitments. Brokers who trust

their carrier networks can make firm commitments to customers regarding delivery times, service levels, and handling requirements. This enables brokers to pursue more challenging and lucrative business opportunities that competitors might avoid due to execution uncertainties.

Strong carrier relationships also enables more aggressive business development activities.

Brokers who know they can reliably execute complex logistics requirements can pursue larger accounts, more demanding service requirements, and premium-priced opportunities that require exceptional execution capabilities.

Operational confidence also reduces the stress and uncertainty that often characterize freight brokerage operations. When brokers trust their carrier networks and have confidence in their relationship management processes, they can focus their attention on growth and optimization activities rather than constantly managing crises and addressing relationship problems.

The confidence created by strong carrier relationships extends to financial performance as well. Predictable carrier relationships enable more accurate cost forecasting, reduce the risk of service failures that require expensive recovery measures, and create opportunities for volume-based pricing advantages.

Customer relationships also benefit significantly when brokers operate with confidence in their carrier networks. Customers can sense when brokers are sure in their execution capabilities versus when they are uncertain about their ability to deliver. This confidence translates

to stronger customer relationships, increased business opportunities, and premium pricing for superior service.

Strong carrier relationships also enables brokers to navigate market volatility more effectively. During tight capacity periods, brokers with strong carrier partnerships can maintain service levels while competitors struggle to secure capacity. During soft markets, strong relationships enable brokers to optimize costs while maintaining service quality.

Risk management also improves significantly when brokers operate with carrier relationships they can depend on. Known carriers with established track records present lower risks than unknown capacity, enabling brokers to take on more challenging business opportunities while maintaining acceptable risk profiles.

The compound effect of operating within carrier relationships you can trust creates sustainable competitive advantages that are difficult for competitors to replicate. These advantages build over time as strong relationships enable increasingly sophisticated service offerings, better customer experiences, and more profitable operations.

Your future is built on trust

All of this together creates one inescapable conclusion: the future of brokering belongs to those who recognize carrier relationships as their most valuable strategic assets and invest accordingly in building and maintaining these partnerships.



The days of treating carrier management as a necessary administrative burden are over. Today, carrier relationships represent the foundation upon which all other business success is built.

DAT's new Carrier Management Suite represents the technological foundation that makes this possible, and even easy in that your team is already used to executing. Comprehensive tools for carrier vetting, onboarding, monitoring, and relationship management in a single platform eliminates the inefficiencies and limitations of traditional approaches while enabling new possibilities.

The path forward is clear. Brokers must recognize that their carrier relationships represent their most valuable assets and invest accordingly in building and maintaining these partnerships. The technology and methodologies exist today to transform carrier relationship management from a burden into a strategic capability. The only question is whether individual brokers will embrace these opportunities or continue to struggle with outdated approaches.

DAT is here to help

Learn more about how the Carrier Management Suite can help you build the carrier relationships that will drive your future success.

Visit [DAT.com/carrier-management-suite](https://www.DAT.com/carrier-management-suite) or contact a DAT representative directly at 800-848-2546.



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