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August 2013 | How-To | **Ten Tips**

Selecting the Right Drayage Provider

By Deborah Catalano Ruriani



Drayage—moving shipments short distances, such as from a port to a nearby warehouse—plays a critical role in intermodal moves, and selecting the right motor carrier partner goes well beyond the lowest rate. Once you move past monetary considerations, examine the total service offering to ensure your drayage provider is the perfect fit. James Miller, account executive at International Asset Systems, offers these tips for selecting the best drayage partner.

- 1. Seek out partners that value safety.** Ensure the company hires drivers who are rated by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, and possess validated Transportation Worker Identification Credential cards and clean driving histories.
- 2. Check on-time delivery history.** Choose a drayage partner whose on-time performance meets the expectations of both you and your customer. The driver's reliability and professionalism are a proxy for your own.
- 3. Ensure the provider has capacity to cover assignments.** If you assign hundreds of loads, you should know your drayage partner has them covered, and nothing will fall through the cracks.
- 4. Require responsiveness.** You need a partner who will answer your call, whether you are submitting a rate request, confirming receipt of a work order, or checking shipment status. Evaluate your potential partner's responsiveness and communication capabilities.
- 5. Select a carrier that shares your culture.** If your company is driving environmental initiatives, find partners with similar green goals. If yours is a high-touch, service-centered company, your partner's reliability is critical. Compare mission statements, and select a motor carrier that shares your company's values.
- 6. Ask about data availability.** Be sure your partner can provide as much data as you need, when you need it. Can it provide confirmation of receipt and appointment time quickly enough? Offer proof of delivery before your customer asks for it? Track and trace shipments, then alert you when the load arrives so it can be picked up on time to avoid storage fees?
- 7. Expect accurate billing—and notification of exceptions.** Invoices should be accurate, with no surprises. On-the-fly changes are inevitable, but a good drayage partner



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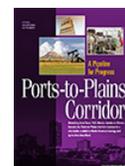
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will communicate them as quickly as possible. For example, you should be notified of a wait-time charge immediately, not after 90 minutes of idling.

8. Look for a well-informed motor carrier. True partners can spot problems before they happen. Expect them to share that a port is striking; bad weather is approaching; or a driver may have trouble getting to the terminal. Look for a solutions provider that can advise you to pull on a different weekday to save money; or find a street-turn opportunity that will save you both money.

9. Choose specialization to meet your needs. If your partner can provide specialized equipment, such as tri-axle chassis or reefers, you will not have to supply it or find one to rent. If you need the drayage provider to accommodate high-value goods such as hazardous materials, pharmaceuticals, or refrigerated produce, ensure it has the necessary capabilities and certifications.

10. Require knowledge of the local market. Partners who can quickly navigate the gates and traffic at terminals and facilities have faster turn times. Find partners who understand facility procedures and roadways so you can get cargo moving quickly.



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