

BEST PRACTICES

Choosing a Dispatcher: How to Protect Your Trucking Business

Many owner-operators eventually reach a point where they consider hiring a dispatcher. Freight has slowed down, rates are frustrating, and too much time is spent searching load boards instead of driving. A good dispatcher can absolutely help by finding freight, negotiating rates, reducing paperwork, and keeping your truck moving.

Like any business relationship, though, it's important to understand exactly what you're agreeing to before you sign.

Some opportunities come with high-pressure sales tactics, vague promises of exclusive freight, or "sign today" deadlines that make it difficult to slow down and ask the right questions.

Before You Sign with a Dispatcher

Hiring a dispatcher is a business decision, not just an operational one. Before signing any agreement, take the time to understand exactly who you're working with and what you're agreeing to.

Here are a few best practices every owner-operator should follow:

Have an attorney review the agreement

Make sure you understand the contract, your obligations, and how to end the relationship if it doesn't work out.

Understand how they operate

Ask how they find freight, how many trucks they dispatch, and whether they hold broker authority if applicable.

Ask for carrier references

Speak with other owner-operators or carriers who currently work with the company.

Research the company

Look for online reviews, business registration records, and a verifiable physical business address.

Know what access you're providing

Be cautious before granting access to banking information, factoring accounts, ELD credentials, or signing a power of attorney. Make sure you understand why that access is needed and how it will be used.

Don't rush the decision

If someone insists you have to sign today to avoid missing an opportunity, consider that a reason to slow down, not speed up.

Doing your homework upfront takes far less time than trying to untangle a relationship that isn't working.

What a Legitimate Dispatch Relationship Looks Like

Dispatchers play an important role in the trucking industry, and many provide valuable services that help owner-operators spend more time driving and less time managing administrative work.

A professional dispatch relationship should be built on transparency and clearly defined responsibilities.

Remember that it's your authority, your reputation, and your business.

A dispatcher should support your operation, not control it.

Before you sign, you should understand:

- What services the dispatcher will provide.
- How they are compensated.
- What authority they have to act on your behalf.
- What information and account access, if any, they require.
- How loads will be presented before you decide to accept them.
- How either party can terminate the agreement.

You should receive enough information about every load, including the broker, commodity, pickup and delivery details, and rate, to make an informed business decision before accepting it.

Warning Signs to Watch For

Not every unusual request is a red flag on its own. But when several of these situations occur together, it's worth slowing down and asking more questions.



Be cautious if a dispatch service:

- Promises rates or profits that sound too good to be true.
- Pressures you to sign immediately or discourages you from reviewing the agreement.
- Won't clearly explain how they operate or what authority they have.
- Requests broad access to banking information, ELD credentials, or financial accounts without a clear business reason.
- Asks you to sign a broad power of attorney without fully explaining why.
- Refuses to provide references from carriers they currently represent.
- Has no verifiable business address or online presence.
- Provides vague load information while asking you to commit quickly.
- Locks you into long-term agreements with significant early termination penalties.

It comes down to transparency.

A legitimate business should be willing to answer reasonable questions, verify its identity, explain its role, and give you the information you need to make an informed decision.

Your Authority. Your Business.

A good dispatcher can become a valuable partner in your business. The goal isn't to avoid working with dispatchers. It's to make sure you're working with one who operates professionally, communicates openly, and respects that your operating authority belongs to you.

Here's the truth: no one has a greater interest in protecting your operating authority than you do. If you're handing your business to someone, be selective in who you pick.



Before you sign an agreement or provide access to your business:

1. Verify who you're working with.
2. Read the contract carefully.
3. Ask questions until you're comfortable.
4. Protect your credentials and financial information.
5. Never feel pressured to make a decision before you're ready.

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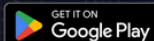
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