

The background features a repeating pattern of stylized green truck icons. Overlaid on this pattern are several circular icons containing a white dollar sign, positioned at the top right, middle left, and bottom left of the page.

WWW.EZINVOICEFACTURING.COM

OWNER-OPERATOR'S GUIDE TO GETTING MORE LOADS

855.393.2286

There is so much for an owner-operator to accomplish to get business going—you have to register for the necessary forms, sift through the licensing and insurance, you have to get a truck, you have to create a budget and anticipate costs, etc. Starting your own trucking business is no easy task.

But perhaps the important thing on the “to-do list” for new owner-operators is getting loads. Securing new customers is, obviously, a must if an independent trucking business is to survive. Without clients, an owner-operator makes no money. However, establishing a solid clientele is hard. It takes skill and some marketing know-how to get the word out about your services.

So what should you do to secure a steady, reliable list of shippers and brokers to help your company grow and thrive? Check out this guide to finding more loads and get the business that you need to ensure that your small trucking business can survive.

Load Boards 101

So, what is an online load board, exactly? In essence, an online load board is an internet venue for people to post freight that needs hauled. Think of it like a “match.com” for truckers and potential clients. Truckers can create accounts to load board websites and find businesses that need shipments delivered. Most small trucking companies and owner-operators get their start by finding partners on load boards.

Aside from pairing truckers and clients, load boards provide a slew of other services for truck drivers. Here are a few of them:

Message boards—when you find freight that you want to carry, you can reach out to the client directly and set up the transaction.

Review mechanisms—after you have delivered a shipment, you can review your experience working with said client. Clients, on their part, can do the same for you, so it is important to make sure that you are professional when working with a load board customer. Good reviews lead to good future transactions.

Credit information—check the credit score of each potential client and make sure that you are doing business with somebody with a clean financial record.

Mobile access—the best load boards are now accessible via app or mobile website so that you can book more loads on the go.

Proof of FMCSA certification—you can upload proof that you are FMCSA certified so that your potential clients will never doubt your credibility.

Spot rates—spotting rates helps you know how much your competitors are getting paid for the loads that they haul. With this tool, you will know how much you should expect to be paid for the loads that you deliver.

Days-to-pay programs—the top load boards will tell you how long you can expect it will take a broker to pay you for your services.

Alert system—most online load boards will alert you when a client has expressed interest in contracting you for their shipment.

Which boards will help you score the best loads?

While it probably is worth the investment to buy a membership to a paid load board, there are some free ones that can get the job done, at first.

Free Online Load Boards

Freight Finder—though Freight Finder’s website is basic, it can find you loads in every American state and Canadian province... for free.

DSSLN—this board, though not pretty on the eyes, either, can help you find a load and also offers a “contact us” page should you run into trouble.

Free Freight Search—perhaps the best free load board, this website gives owner-operators access to services that some paid sites don’t even offer.

ReferATruck.com—this free board is mobile friendly, and their desktop website is comprehensive.

Trulos Transportation—equipped with a surprisingly entertaining blog, Trulos is a solid free, online load board. Check out their Truck Load Forecast feature.

There are a few decent free online load boards out there for owner-operators.

However, in finding truck loads as in anything else, you get what you pay for. It’s a good idea to explore the paid boards in addition to the free ones.

Paid Online Load Boards

With limited funds, finding freight free of charge can be necessary at first. However, there is little doubt within the industry that better loads are found on paid online load boards. Most range between \$30-\$100 per month.

123 Load Board— 123 has a much more professional, developed user interface than your average free board and offers a 10-day free trial.

TruckersEdge—a typical plan costs between \$30-\$50 per month. TruckersEdge probably offers the best system in place to spot rates—the DAT load board helps you make sure that you are getting the market price for your services.

Direct Freight Services—this load board comes with all of the perks that you would expect of a for-pay load board, and also offers free trials.

Comfreight—Comfreight prides itself on its mobile compatibility and is relatively inexpensive, compared to its competitors.

Online load boards work for finding loads at the onset of your career. Purchasing a membership to a load board is typically a good investment, but you may be able to get by on the free platforms for a while.

Marketing 101

Load boards are great for those just starting out, but eventually you'll want to find some better-paying clients on your own. Trust us, getting more loads doesn't end at paying \$40/month for a load board. That's why you should nail down some basic marketing tactics to help get the word out about your company.

So what types of things can you do to help potential customers know about your small trucking business?

Branding—it doesn't need to be anything intricate, but a brand always helps. You need a logo or a slogan (or both) that you can throw on a website, social account, business cards, or even your truck. Brand recognition, even for a small owner-operator is a powerful tool. When you do secure a client and haul freight, having a brand and a little slogan throughout the transaction will give you an air of legitimacy. If you need help with a logo, you can find a designer on Fiverr.com to create one for as little as \$5.

Seek out Trade Associations—there is no guarantee that there is one in your area, but see if you can't find some sort of club or association for other members of the transportation industry or other industries that are known to ship a lot of freight. Networking in such a way will help you see how others have found success as owner-operators and can help you recruit new clients.

Local Outreach— you shouldn't hesitate to reach out to local businesses that might have freight to ship. Print out a small letter and business card, introduce yourself and your services and drop it off in mailboxes. Knock on doors, shake hands, and make phone calls— anything that you can do to introduce yourself to companies in your locality. Consider these potential marketing outreach strategies:

- Anywhere that will let you, hang up a flier. This includes community centers, local gas stations, and heck, even try a coffee shop or two. If it isn't remarkably expensive, try and buy a small advertisement in your local paper. You never know who will notice it (and be sure to include your logo, of course). You can even advertise your services on a site like Craigslist.org.

- Call local business owners. Introduce yourself and sell your services. We get it, cold calling is an unpleasant task. Just remember that the worst thing they can do is hang up.
- Keep business cards. It lends a professional feel to your enterprise. And you never know when you'll need to hand one out.
- Get a small sign for wherever your home base is. Odds are you don't have an office—that's okay, you don't need one. But get a sign made up for your front yard, even, and keep your brand in your community's eye.
- Attend community events and seek out local networking opportunities. The more you put yourself out there, the better chance you'll have to find new prospects.

Incentivize Referrals—offer your previous clients discounts if they refer your services to their colleagues or business contacts. It is one of the oldest strategies in the book, but it works like a charm.

Keep an Eye on the Competition—all the while, you need to make sure that your services are keeping up with your competitors. While there is a high demand for truck drivers, make sure that you are aware of how much your competitors charge, know where they are finding their business and make sure that your services are swifter and better.

Setup a Simple Website— Setting up a small website with a few pages using a site builder like Wordpress is relatively inexpensive. A website shows you mean business and it provides an easy avenue for potential clients to contact you.

If you have a creative streak, you can even include a blog on your website. Trucking blogs are pretty common on the internet, and for good reason—it is entertaining to hear about your travels! You go everywhere during your work. Nowadays, you can drop pins, upload photos and check in at all of your locations much more easily.

It will let prospective clients know that you do a lot of business and shows you're excited about what you do. Even if you're not into writing, you can always use it to post images of the places you've been.

Social Media Presence

While you could argue that this should fall under the marketing section, social media and online marketing are so pivotal nowadays that it is only fitting that they get their own, special section. There are now tons of ways to make new contacts and attract clientele with social media. Whether or not you enjoy Twitter, Instagram, Facebook or LinkedIn in your personal life, you really ought to make an account for your trucking business. For each of the main social media accounts, consider the following:

Facebook

A company Facebook page is almost a requisite, even for a small one-truck shop. Have somebody with a good camera take a photo of you and your truck for your profile photo, and have your trucking logo (logos are important, can't stress that enough) as your background photo. Enter a short bio of your business, your contact info, and from time to time post an update.

If you don't want to invest the energy in creating a website, you can use your Facebook page as your company's surrogate official website. It will show up in search results and provides an easy way for potential customers to get in touch. Don't be afraid to ask for reviews on Facebook from your customers.

Twitter

This platform is great for the short stuff. The social media outlet is famous for its 140 character limit, so use it to tweet your travels. Upload photos, tweet about crazy things you see on the road and be sure to use hashtags that will help your tweets circulate efficiently. #trucking

LinkedIn

You should have a LinkedIn account simply because it is prudent for any serious entrepreneur. Many small business owners use LinkedIn as a resource for finding business partners—make sure that your company isn't passed up.

Online Communities

It's likely you spend much of your work day (or work night) solo, but there are plenty of online trucking communities you can join to get a little bit social and learn a few tips of the trade in the process.

Connecting with other drivers should help spur your own ideas to build your customer list and will likely help you make a few friends along the way. It's a win-win. Here are a few forums you can start with:

- [Expeditiononline.com](https://www.expeditiononline.com)
- [Reddit - trucking](https://www.reddit.com/r/trucking)
- [TheTruckersReport.com](https://www.thetruckersreport.com)
- [Truckdriver.com](https://www.truckdriver.com)

In addition to forums, there are LinkedIn groups for truckers and plenty of fellow drivers on Twitter.

General Practice Tips

Aside from using load boards, engaging in local outreach and upping your social media game, make sure that you run your trucking business with diligence, timeliness and professionalism. The best way to ensure more loads is to keep clients coming back, and to encourage them to spread the word about your services through word-of-mouth recommendations. Never turn down a load, never take unnecessary delays. Build yourself an outstanding reputation.

If, along the way, you need help boosting your cash flow to cover upfront expenses or fuel costs, give Factor Finders a call. We specialize in getting owner-operators the funds the funding they need through our freight factoring services. We have the ability to find you the low rates you're looking for along with the services you expect.

Give us a call at [855.393.2286](tel:855.393.2286). We'd be happy to help you out or just tell you more about our factoring services.