

RELIABLE AND COST-COMPETITIVE SERVICE: BEST PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATING INTERMODAL INTO YOUR TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY

WHAT IS INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION?

Intermodal transportation is the movement of freight by combination of rail and road, typically in 53' intermodal shipping containers. It's used when a shipper needs to move long-transit freight cost-efficiently. Today the U.S. rail network is a well-oiled machine, cost-effectively carrying more than **40 tons of freight** – and counting – for every person in the country.



There are numerous factors for transportation professionals to consider before implementing – or improving – their intermodal transportation strategy. **Here are five best practices that experienced intermodal transportation professionals are using to navigate the market for long-term success.**

1. LEVERAGE PRECISION SCHEDULED RAILROADING (PSR)

To get the most out of working with an intermodal provider, look for one that leverages PSR. PSR is a rail improvement strategy that transports the same amount of freight with fewer rail cars and locomotives, while using a scheduled direct line of transport across a network. CSX recently converted to PSR, which has enabled longer trains, faster speeds and less dwell time in terminals since its conversion. As a primary rail used by Schneider, this is good news for shippers.

For those moving freight with providers using railroads that will be switching to PSR, a **multimodal provider** should be on the priority list. During PSR implementation shippers can expect ramp closures, decreased service and increased cost. To navigate these disruptions, ensure you have established relationships with providers like Schneider that are shipping intermodal on CSX and offer multimodal solutions to route freight the best ways possible.



2. CONNECT WITH AN INTERMODAL PROVIDER THAT INVESTS IN EQUIPMENT

When the U.S. economy is thriving, businesses are growing and more freight needs moving. That's when shippers may find their providers don't have intermodal containers or chassis to support their needs, which is bad news for shippers that plan to grow or that have seasonal business spikes.

It's important to find providers that invest in intermodal equipment to support future growth. Schneider, which has **increased its intermodal shipping** containers 24% from 2017–18, also has a track record for increasing shippers' payloads up to 10% with company-owned and maintained **chassis**.



3. PRIORITIZE CARRIERS WITH UNIFORMED, PROFESSIONAL, SAFE DRIVERS

Increasing requirements for owner-operators puts a strain on providers to deliver. With lawsuits mounting and new bills like [California's Assembly Bill 5](#) increasing requirements for contractors, shippers need to find carriers that attract and retain company drivers.

In addition to requiring company drivers, uniformed and trained to follow the highest safety standards, shippers should also ask carriers what they do beyond the federal law requiring urinalysis to remove unqualified candidates. After all, the more qualified and professional truck drivers are, the better the experience shippers' customers can have with the company.



4. IMPROVE FREIGHT CHARACTERISTICS

It's just as important to become a [shipper of choice](#) for intermodal providers as it is any other mode of transportation. Intermodal providers dealing with productivity loss in the market or battling tight market capacity begin to prioritize loads from shippers with friendly freight characteristics.

By working with a supportive intermodal provider like Schneider, shippers can efficiently improve their transportation strategy to include characteristics like open appointment windows and drop and hook instead of live loads to ensure their loads remain top priority.



5. HOLD PROVIDER ACCOUNTABLE TO OUTPERFORM THE SPOT MARKET

As with all modes of transportation, the spot market can be attractive when capacity becomes widely available. However, when capacity inevitably tightens, shippers that try to convert back to their intermodal provider can find containers, drivers and capacity removed from areas they need it.



It's vital to establish a long-term strategic game plan with an intermodal provider. In working with a freight service provider like Schneider, you can bet on an optimized and less stressful supply chain. Also, a great attribute to look for in an intermodal provider is if they have a dedicated intermodal onboarding team to set the business up for success from the start.

To learn more about how Schneider Intermodal provides efficient, truck-like reliability that's built around a shipper's business, visit [Schneider.com/our-services/intermodal](https://www.schneider.com/our-services/intermodal).