



# Big M Transportation/Diesel Express Manages a 300+ Fleet and Helps Get Freight From A to B at a Better Price Via SONAR

# Introduction

Big M Transportation/Diesel Express provides freight transportation and logistics services from its headquarters in Blue Mountain, Mississippi. As a family-owned and -operated business with freight transportation offered in the 48 contiguous states, insight into national and local markets is a key focus among owners Michael and Lisa Massengill. Michael founded the company in 2000 and today, the brand offers a 400 asset fleet, 50+ power-only fleet, more than 1,300 trailers & 8,000+ Carrier Partners and an impressive business case to any company looking for more capacity in today's market.

Big M Transportation managers saw FreightWaves SONAR in its early stages about two years ago. However, added pressures on the industry led Big M Transportation's leaders to reconsider their current pricing strategy. And that was what kick-started the purchase of SONAR, its implementation and the generation of results during the greatest peak season in history.

## The Business Challenge

Big M Transportation started the process of vetting potential supply chain intelligence platforms in March 2020. The process was relatively straightforward, but then, the pandemic upended everything. The sudden surge in demand left little time to spend in making a decision. And so, Big M Transportation managers participated in several SONAR demonstrations from March through August. Big M needed a way to increase the accuracy of quotes and ensure pricing insights were available in real-time.



We started learning more about SONAR last year during the demos, and while we are still in the learning phases, we are moving forward and exploring new applications to boost productivity.”

Big M managers' goal was to refine the company's pricing strategy to streamline quoting and avoid undervaluing or overvaluing services provided across the U.S.

## Big M Transportation Uses a Variety of Freight Data Resources to Thrive

Big M Transportation had historically used DAT, RateView and TruckerTools to manage pricing strategies. But those solutions often resulted in “assumed pricing” that was already outdated at the time of quoting or booking. As such, significant risks were being taken as demands for faster quotes came through the virtual and physical world. Now, however, Big M Transportation leverages a combination of both SONAR and DAT to identify trends across the market, see the variances between SONAR and DAT and find a rate that considers everything. However, advances in SONAR's ability to track market rates and capture data, including paid invoiced data, has improved the company's bid accuracy and further streamlined office functions. In short, the company's whole team has been able to derive more actionable insights.

According to Whitney Stokes, Vice President of Logistics at Big M Transportation,



We are actively looking through our prior tools and SONAR to figure out what the most accurate pricing will be on all loads. Even while having access to load boards is great, the addition of SONAR makes all team members more proactive in managing rates and applying data whenever possible. In fact, Lane Signal is among the favored tools within SONAR and being able to view the shipper-versus favor market for all O-D pairings.”

## Continuous Improvements Are Realized Through Core SONAR Features and Use Cases

As an asset-based transportation provider, Big M Transportation needed a way to enable continuous improvement, particularly in the spot market. While the brokerage transportation services and power units primarily ran contract freight, the company’s brokerage side was securing freight and capacity daily. That demand made greater insight into pricing an absolute necessity. Whitney Stokes further noted:



The increased access to data has allowed our team to proactively manage rates and tap the value of smart capacity. Our team members use the SONAR user interface to log in every day, and we are able to track our performance too. Instead of trying to figure out where team members would get random price points, we can point to SONAR and say, ‘this is where the markets are experiencing trouble and resulting in added pressure. In turn, that comes together to build a proactive pricing strategy and adds value. ”

Of course, that SONAR usage has converted into a marked increase in these core brokerage and asset-management functions:

- Increased confidence in conducting RFPs and particularly mini-bids.
- Better understanding of market trends and recognizing what’s happening through the drill-down data within Lane Signal.
- Identifying hot versus cooling lanes via Lane Signal and Lane Scorecard to pull data at once to help with bidding processes.
- Being a voice of reason and insight to Big M Transportation customers through the value and data provided by SONAR.

## Summary

With SONAR up and running at all times across all brokerage desks at Big M Transportation, now is a truly exciting time for the company. Instead of assumption-based and plucked-from-the-air quoting practices, Big M Transportation is on track to achieve marked growth, become a strategic partner to its customers and avoid confusion as market fluctuations occur.



By using SONAR in collaboration with other tools, we have successfully secured more contracts since implementation,”