



Q Carriers: Technology Helps Provide Dependable Service For Four Decades

Q Carriers is an asset-based transportation and logistics provider headquartered in Shakopee, Minnesota. Since 1981 it has been moving freight cross-country, relying on the most advanced technology, late-model trucks and trailers, and highly proficient and experienced drivers. The company has implemented innovative business practices to stay ahead of industry demands and government regulations, and to ensure the highest quality service to its customers.

A family-owned business, Q Carriers has a fleet of refrigerated trucks with the latest technology to move products throughout the continental United States. The company also offers regional freight service, moving dry and refrigerated goods throughout the Midwest. Q Carriers Logistics is the company's nationwide brokerage firm that matches customers with freight needs with trucking companies that have available capacity.

Q Carriers' drivers have always been the backbone of its business and it employs some of the best in the business. They're experienced, safe and conscientious, offering nothing but the best service to Q Carriers customers.

Information for this profile was provided by Todd Waldron, the CEO of Q Carriers, Inc. Prior to joining Q Carriers in April 2019, he worked for nearly 12 years for two of the most respected names in the industry - J.B. Hunt and C.H. Robinson - garnering valuable experience in transportation and logistics. Waldron has worked in carrier management, customer sales, account management, branch management, as well as marketing and technology development. His passion and experience guide him to help create an enjoyable transportation experience for Q Carriers' drivers, employees and customers. He graduated from Minnesota State University, Mankato with a degree in Business Management.

Transformation

As its business has grown over the past 40 years, Q Carriers has stayed at the forefront of technology. It has made an impact on the trucking industry by helping to develop new products and technologies that have made dramatic changes to the industry. Company employees take great pride in that and continue to be involved in leading the industry in these critical areas.

Waldron explained that the company started Q Carriers Logistics about a year ago, adding logistics services to its trucking company roots. This has been viewed by customers and employees alike as a very positive move.

Also over the last year, Q Carriers has been updating its tools and culture - and **FreightWaves SONAR has been a key part of the transformation** that has occurred. While managing its daily businesses, the company has been adapting culture and process while implementing results-oriented change management. These changes have been backstopped by more technology and data so that the company's owners, leadership team and employees look at the business differently and so that the leadership team can make more educated decisions.

The Q Carriers leadership team also wants to use the company's tech stack to create greater market differentiation and to help grow Q Carriers Logistics. The company's owners, Randy and Ryan Quiring, and its leadership team have set aggressive growth targets for the next three to five years.

Q Carriers' Tech Stack

In addition to using SONAR, Q Carriers also uses DAT/Chainalytics (primarily for bids), McLeod Software and Microsoft Excel. Because Q Carriers' trucking arm has a focus on refrigerated freight, staff members like SONAR's new Reefer Rates (beta) feature. Reefer Rates (beta) uses machine learning and algorithmic calculations similar to SONAR's dry van rates, with a reefer premium. Reefer premiums are derived from historic ratios of reefer/van rates on lanes and the origin reefer volume market conditions.

Prior to subscribing to SONAR, market fluctuations, the balance between relationship/service and rates and increasing costs were among the industry forces making it difficult for the company to always achieve its goals. According to Waldron,



We were looking for more external information to guide our conversations with customers about managing routing guide volume volatility and our network balance. We were frustrated by the lack of insight into carrier behavior in the market, the lack of timeliness or the lag of the data between when it was captured and when we were using it to make decisions.

He continued, **“When we began the company’s culture transformation there was a real need to get near-time data and information to people to drive curiosity and a desire to learn more. We have that now with SONAR.”**

Choosing SONAR

According to Waldron, the key reasons Q Carriers chose SONAR included its **“market information, pricing support, timeliness and consistency of data. But a key reason beyond those was that it contributed to employee autonomy in decision-making. SONAR has also helped our staff to think differently, look at things differently and also drive decision-making. In general, it has driven value as the leadership team has been able to make more educated decisions.”**

Q Carriers has been utilizing SONAR for just over one year. Waldron and other members of the leadership team use it daily. He added that,



Getting started with SONAR was easy, considering the amount of information that SONAR contains. While it took a little time to get our bearings, the Freightwaves team was very helpful.

SONAR has provided **“market visibility into how other carriers are reacting in the market,”** Waldron said. He also remarked, **“We are able to get much more rapid feedback on how our decisions relate to other carrier behavior in the market. Our logistics team is better equipped to decide when to take more loads and at what rate.”**

Charts are Waldron’s favorite SONAR features.



The chart views have become the most consistent part of our daily routine. I love to see the trend of the data to understand where it was and where it might be going. I like the map views as well; I can see where an index is in relation to other geographic locations, but I prefer to see where it’s at in relation to where it has been.

At the same time, it is SONAR’s indices that he uses the most. “I have found the most value in SONAR’s indices. They help to provide both broad and narrow views on what is happening in the market. The indices also provide enormous amounts of metrics in order to help answer the ‘why’ questions.”

By monitoring load tenders, SONAR users can get advanced analytics on the condition of the freight market, long before spot market data indicates market changes. “The only challenge previously was trying to interpret freight market activity into an actionable decision at the lane level,” FreightWaves founder and CEO Craig Fuller explained when Lane Signal was introduced in May.

With SONAR Lane Signal, users can access analytics down to the granular level of a lane. Lane Signal's consolidated dashboard gives shippers, carriers and brokers real-time trucking spot rates, pricing power information, and volume and capacity data on any origin-destination pair in the continental U.S. Lane Signal automatically aggregates and analyzes data from a number of sources to give subscribers a clear read into lanes they search.

In addition, Lane Signal's Pricing Power gauges utilize numerous SONAR indices along with proprietary algorithms to distill and score whether a shipper or carrier has negotiating strength on a particular lane. A Lane Signal user simply enters the origin and destination cities of the lane; the app does the rest. Lane Signal allows users to see current data, as well as week-over-week, month-over-month and year-over-year historical pricing data on trucking lanes.

This information can assist the user in pricing freight by lane (for example, Los Angeles to Chicago). This means they can price freight movements more accurately. The origin and destination cities, as well as surrounding areas, will show haul strength down to the Zip 3 granularity. In addition, when a user comes back to the Lane Signal tool, the last/preferred view will automatically be shown.

Waldron noted that, "We have started to utilize Lane Signal more in our daily operations and decision-making. I believe this will add more and more value to us over the coming months."

SONAR subscribers can give others in their organizations access to Lane Signal. It can be configured as a stand-alone app within SONAR, providing lane intelligence to the organization. For example, at a freight brokerage like Q Carriers Logistics, those on the brokerage floor can use the Lane Signal app to quote rates on specific lanes based on the latest SONAR information.

Another SONAR feature that Waldron commented on was its Critical Events widget. "I see a lot of value in Critical Events for our operations team. We utilize it on our operations floor, and its use will continue to grow." The company is also using the SONAR Alerts feature "more and more."

Because of its importance to the company and its future, Waldron talked repeatedly of the transformation effort that Q Carriers has instituted. He said that SONAR had contributed to that effort. "We've been heavily focused for the last year on a cultural and value transformation. SONAR has helped lay the foundation for data-driven decision-making."

Waldron also thinks that SONAR has caused Q Carriers' reps to spend less time covering loads. "From an anecdotal perspective, I believe SONAR speeds up their work. The information we receive from SONAR and the Daily Watch emails (sent to all SONAR subscribers Sunday through Friday) helps them make more educated decisions and react more appropriately based on market conditions."

SONAR has also built confidence in decision-making inside the company. "Absolutely," Waldron answered when asked about decision-making. "Customers are always quick to tell you when the market is causing pressure of some sort. Typically, the tension is worse when they are feeling the strain from other providers as well," Waldron explained.



SONAR helps to give some outside, real-time perspective to what our customers may be feeling in general. This helps us make more educated decisions as we strive to execute our customer-focused strategy in regard to current market conditions. Our teams are better equipped to navigate customer conversations and shipment-level decisions. As a leadership team, we are better equipped to plan and allocate resources.

In regard to validating daily capacity-planning decisions, Waldron said that Q Carriers was using SONAR effectively. “Additionally, SONAR has challenged us as a leadership team to think more deeply about the way we procure capacity. SONAR provides the data and information to allow us to make market-informed decisions, instead of relying on a gut, guess and check method.”

Answering a question about company strategy, Waldron said, “As a company, Q Carriers is looking for more strategic, long-term customer partnerships. SONAR data and information have driven strategic conversations around the need to realign our asset network to maximize utilization over the long-term.” He added that like many companies this year, “COVID-19 has introduced a whole new layer to the

network balance and utilization conversation. Without SONAR, we would be completely lost and making decisions in the dark.”

Summary

Answering “Why would you recommend SONAR?” Waldron’s answer was definitive.



Ultimately, SONAR enables us to provide more value to our customers both directly through conversations about the data and information, as well as indirectly by guiding our daily and strategic decision-making in support of their business objectives.