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LABOR EFFICIENCY AT THE DOCK:

**FREEING  
TEAMS FROM  
SCHEDULING  
CHAOS**



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

A dock scheduling coordinator's morning rarely starts on plan. By the time they open their inbox, it's already full of appointment requests. Phones are ringing. Drivers show up unannounced. Warehouse staff stand idle, waiting for direction on what's coming in and when.

Manual dock scheduling is one of the most labor-intensive, error-prone processes in warehouse and distribution operations. The logistics involved in handling all the moving parts drain time and energy, and individuals who can grasp all this could, paradoxically, be better utilized tackling much higher-value work.

Automated dock scheduling tools, Opendock among them, change this equation. The shift isn't just about resolving logistics problems — it's a play for greater labor efficiency, freeing teams from reactive busywork. The result is warehouse staff being able to prioritize throughput, safety, and customer service. In an industry where daily fluctuations are as common as seasonal upheavals, these tools are becoming table stakes.

## **II. THE HIDDEN LABOR COST OF MANUAL SCHEDULING**

The hours a typical facility spends coordinating appointments via phone, email, and spreadsheets add up fast, and the ripple effects extend well beyond the scheduling desk.

A 2014 FMCSA study found that roughly 1 in 10 stops resulted in detention, with drivers spending an average of 3.4 hours at the facility—1.4 hours of which exceeded the two-hour standard. A follow-up analysis by DOT's Office of Inspector General estimated that a 15-minute increase in average dwell time raises the expected crash rate by 6.2%, and that detention costs for-hire truckload drivers more than \$1 billion in annual earnings.

Part of this comes down to dock managers, yard coordinators, and customer service reps often having to wear multiple hats to cover for inefficiencies due to manual processes. Drivers arrive without appointments, creating unplanned labor surges. Overlapping bookings bottleneck dock doors and



idle warehouse associates. Last-minute changes force supervisors into firefighting mode instead of managing their teams.

Even if you can weather the impaired safety and costs related to demurrage charges and detention fees, this mode of constant interruptions and reactive work leads to burnout and turnover. Annual turnover in warehousing and logistics operations can exceed 40%. Allowing subpar operations to push out highly skilled workers is costly in a tight labor market.

### III. WHAT “AUTOMATED SCHEDULING” ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

With these numerous issues revolving around manual scheduling, supply chain professionals are beginning to adopt automated scheduling at an increasing rate. Adoption of logistics automation is accelerating across the supply chain, and dock scheduling is no exception.

Tools like Opendock provide automated scheduling features such as:

- **SELF-SERVICE CARRIER BOOKING:** Carriers and brokers can book their own appointments through a portal, updating available time slots and dock doors in real-time and eliminating back-and-forth communication loops.
- **RULE-BASED SLOT MANAGEMENT:** Facilities define available windows, door assignments, commodity types, and capacity limits upfront. An automated scheduling tool enforces these rules automatically.
- **EXCEPTION HANDLING WITHOUT THE CHAOS:** When cancellations or delays happen, the system can reassign slots and notify affected parties, no calling required.
- **CENTRALIZED CALENDAR VIEW:** One centralized dashboard replaces dozens of spreadsheets, with an intuitive design giving supervisors real-time visibility into what freight is coming, when, and at which door.

These capabilities represent the baseline for any dock scheduling tool worth evaluating. The operational value comes from how well they work together, and how quickly teams can adopt them.



## IV. LABOR PRODUCTIVITY GAINS: WHERE THE TIME GOES

One thing that's hard to quantify but even harder to deny is the indirect impact that automated dock scheduling has on your overall labor productivity and efficiency.

These include knock-on effects such as:

- **ADMIN HOURS RECOVERED:** Imagine the time that admins have to spend on handling calls or bouncing around emails to set appointments, constantly having to verify that freight is en route and on-time. Then, consider the additional process of notifying all relevant team members to ensure that staff and equipment are ready to handle unloading or loading. With automated appointment scheduling, each of these processes can be made instantaneous, significantly reducing weekly admin hours spent on scheduling coordination.
- **FLOOR LABOR OPTIMIZATION:** Predictable appointment flow lets managers staff and allocate equipment to actual demand rather than worst-case scenarios. Then, fewer surprise arrivals result in fewer idle periods and overtime spikes, improving cost efficiency.
- **SUPERVISOR TIME REDIRECTED:** Instead of resolving scheduling conflicts (reactive time and effort), supervisors can focus on coaching, safety walkthroughs, and continuous improvement (proactive time and effort).
- **REDUCED DETENTION AND DEMURRAGE:** Automated appointment scheduling removes the guesswork when it comes to departures and arrivals. These faster, more predictable turns mean carriers aren't sitting and dock teams aren't scrambling to unload trucks under pressure.

One such example includes Glazer's Beer and Beverage, who used to schedule by phone, email, or paper calendars, resulting in one to two hours per day spent manually booking appointments at each of their 11 distribution centers. Following their adoption of Opdock for automated scheduling, they achieved a 99% carrier self-scheduling rate, with some locations approaching 100% dock utilization and a measurably improved ability to forecast workload and reallocate staff to higher-priority tasks like picking.

## V. THE MORALE AND RETENTION FACTOR

Yet another indirect positive impact for teams using automated dock scheduling is the improvement of employee morale and retention.



**BURNOUT IS A SCHEDULING PROBLEM:** Constant context-switching between phone calls, emails, and floor operations is cognitively exhausting for employees. Keeping track of different logistical details, especially in small warehouse teams where one employee has to wear different hats, can quickly wear down your staff, in addition to making them more likely to make mistakes.



**GIVING PEOPLE BETTER WORK TO DO:** When you remove the grind of manual coordination, employees can take on more meaningful responsibilities. Such tasks have two-pronged benefits, as they tend to contribute more directly to the profitability of your business and also give employees a greater sense that their effort matters. Think of tasks such as quality checks, process improvement, and cross-training.



**RETENTION MATH:** Logistics teams sometimes balk at subscription fees for scheduling software. But the cost of replacing a warehouse worker or dock coordinator almost always dwarfs the cost of a tool that makes their job sustainable.



**EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE:** In a labor market where warehouses compete for talent, “we don’t make you do everything by spreadsheet” is a differentiator. Position your business to better attract high-quality talent that will feel as if their efforts in your organization are valued and appreciated.

Rather than accepting employee turnover as “part of the risks” of operating, transportation and logistics managers should consider if a change such as embracing automation would improve both employee recruitment and employee retention.

## VI. GETTING STARTED WITHOUT DISRUPTING OPERATIONS

With so many benefits of adopting automated dock scheduling tools, it may come down to pure misconceptions leading teams to stick to manual methods of operating. After all, in an industry plagued with fluctuations and unpredictable elements, “manual scheduling has always worked for us” is a strong objection, as is being concerned about downtime during new software implementation. The reality is that modern dock scheduling tools are designed for fast onboarding with minimal disruption.

Additionally, one way to reduce friction for you, your staff, and your workers is to adopt a phased rollout approach to implementing dock scheduling software. This can be as simple as starting with one facility or one dock area utilizing the tool. Try a tool in action to prove that it saves time, is easy for your employees to use, and reduces issues. Then, expand.



A common concern is carrier adoption. In practice, carriers tend to prefer self-service scheduling because it saves them time too—a quick look at available slots and a few clicks beats a phone call and a hold queue.

A glance at a dock scheduling portal allows carriers to immediately see what time slots and dock doors are available to schedule the deliveries. With just a few clicks, they can schedule freight, which is a streamlined process as beneficial for them as it is for you as you cut down on back-and-forth calls and emails.



### **QUICK WINS TO LOOK FOR IN THE FIRST 30 DAYS:**

If you need a little extra encouragement to make the switch to automated dock scheduling, it's worth noting that adopters tend to see a few immediate benefits including:

- Fewer phone calls
- Cleaner schedules
- Reduced overtime
- Minimized human error
- Enhanced transparency (freight, staff, equipment)

While a dash of skepticism makes sense, simply trying a dock scheduling tool costs almost nothing and can produce benefits for your business immediately.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

Supply chains face continued pressure to do more with less. Manual dock scheduling — one of the most persistent sources of inefficiency at the facility level — is an obvious place to start. The adoption of dock scheduling automation is less an IT project and more a necessary workforce strategy for greater flexibility, optimization, and profitability.

Automated scheduling gives operations teams a way to reclaim admin hours, stabilize labor planning, improve morale, and reduce turnover. The result isn't just a smoother dock—it's a more resilient facility.





As supply chains face continued pressure to do more with less, the facilities that invest in removing friction for their people will outperform. Luckily, Opendock offers a way of seeing how dock automation fits your operation.



## TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR DOCK OPERATIONS

See how Opendock can transform your warehouse operations. Streamline scheduling, reduce truck wait times, and prevent costly delays—all from one simple platform.

### WITH OPENDOCK, YOU CAN:

-  Schedule in real-time and never double-book again
-  Keep trucks moving efficiently
-  Maximize utilization and productivity
-  Say goodbye to endless calls and emails

*Trusted by warehouses nationwide to simplify dock scheduling and improve efficiency.*



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