


WHITE PAPER

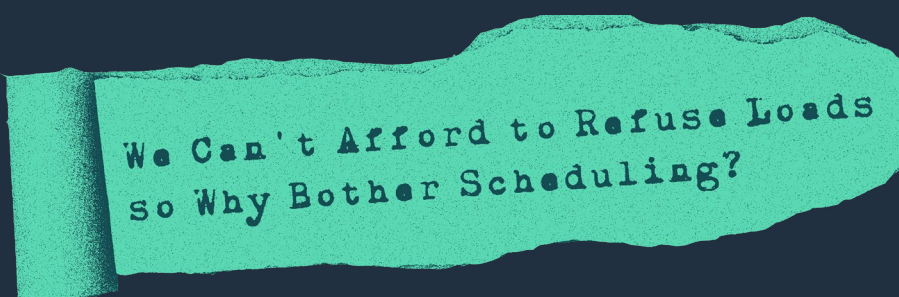
Common Myths About Dock Scheduling

Breaking down 7 Misconceptions Surrounding Dock Scheduling




Dock Scheduling Software is
EXPENSIVE

A Dock Scheduling Software is TOO EXPENSIVE



We Can't Afford to Refuse Loads
so Why Bother Scheduling?



I Don't Need A
Dock Appointment
Scheduling Because
I Deal
With A 3PL



Dock Scheduling Over The Web - My Carriers and
Suppliers Will Never Do It!



In Brief

As the title suggests, the purpose of this whitepaper is to address some of the myths related to dock scheduling¹. Company visionaries, be they CEOs, warehouse supervisors, IT project managers, continuous improvement team leaders, often face the challenge, among others, of breaking down myths.

The articles herein are taken from blogs posted on our website; appropriately regrouped in this whitepaper to help these leaders break down the myths related to **dock scheduling**.

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¹ Dock Scheduling is synonymous with Appointment Scheduling, Bookings, Time Slotting. Defined as the planning and scheduling of the trailers or containers at a warehouse (or store) for deliveries or pick-ups.

“I Only Need A Basic Appointment Tool”

So you have reached the conclusion that you need some help to optimize your appointment process? You are now searching for possible solutions that will streamline scheduling operations between your business and your vendors as well as your carriers. Which system out there will meet your needs?

But wait...do you know what you need? Various solutions can be found. They usually can be divided in two main categories: appointment management and **dock scheduling**.

What Is An Appointment Management System?

An appointment management system most often consists of a spreadsheet or some calendar tool that allows your business users to fill in time slots as they are booked. Useful color codes can provide visibility on the appointment status, although providing visibility to people across all your divisions may be complicated. Certainly any basic appointment management system will prevent bottlenecks and reduce carrier driver wait times; which can result in important savings.

A simple appointment scheduling system can be made efficient when managed by an excellent scheduler; one who's constantly on top of things and available to manage exceptions and problems.

In summary, a basic appointment management system is a tool by which an experienced scheduler may record appointment times in order manage inbound flow and maximize the labor utilization rate in the facility.

What Is A Dock Scheduling System?

A true dock scheduling system distinguishes itself from basic appointment scheduling by its ability to prioritize the traffic based on constraints related to suppliers, carriers, customers, load types, product types and other business priorities (such as promotions).

Certainly an experienced scheduler who has an in-depth understanding of your business can make those judgement calls currently.

If you're about to implement a scheduling system and that person doesn't yet exist, or you now realize that your scheduling operations are at the mercy of one or two individuals who have the quality of owning all the information in their head; then you'll benefit from implementing a true dock scheduling system.

Dock scheduling systems should also feature external web portals, resulting in nearly eliminating the need for phone calls, emails and faxes. Your business team, as well as carriers and suppliers will benefit from real time visibility on appointment statuses through their respective web portal.

Other elements of a dock scheduling system are advanced reporting capabilities that the basic appointment scheduling system can only dream of, and the ability to perform audits on delivered loads. Audit and compliance metrics feedback is then instantly communicated to the concerned parties, giving you the necessary tools to improve service, quality and partner relationships.

When you decide to move on to the next level and leave manual appointment booking behind, the key is to know what you need in order to pick the solution that's right for you.

“Dock Scheduling Over The Web – My Carriers and Suppliers Will Never Do It!”

You've decided to go forward with implementing a new dock scheduling system with web portals through which your carriers are going to book their appointments? Congratulations, your appointment clerks, purchasing team and managers are going to love it!

You may now be concerned, however, that to get the most out of your new dock scheduling system, you will need to involve your suppliers and carriers. That's the objective right? Streamlining the whole appointment process; from A to Z. But will they buy into your project?

As a business you get benefits - but they get some too!

Experience dictates that they certainly will buy into your project, but communication is important. Remind them of the benefits they'll have, both for their office (CSR, staff, schedulers) and for their drivers.

✓ **Ease of use**

Suppliers and carriers will now have a clear and easy way to follow the appointment process. This means that any participant in the process, whether in your appointment team or in the carrier-supplier office, can pick it up easily and perform the necessary steps leading to efficient appointment scheduling.

✓ **Reduced exposure to 'elevator' music**

Yes, the need for phone calls will be reduced dramatically as appointments can be scheduled, confirmed, amended and cancelled via their keyboard, without holding that telephone. Less time spent on appointments means more time on other meaningful work. So while you might be concerned about adding extra tasks to your carriers, the reality is you will be saving them a lot of unproductive time.

✓ **A greener office**

If the appointment scheduling system you are implementing support electronic documents, carrier and supplier clerks won't have to print appointment-related paperwork on a daily basis as all the information can be viewed in their own web portal.

✓ **Less waiting time**

Don't you hate it when you book a table at a restaurant, show up on time and wait for your table? It can be merely seconds, a few minutes or even an hour. This is also applicable to driver wait time. The big difference is that driver's company is going to send you an invoice for his time if you keep him waiting.

✓ **Real time awareness**

Along with your business team, carrier and supplier clerks get live updates on their appointments as they occur; all this from their screen and the automated, fully configurable email alert functionality.

If you are serious about working with a dock scheduling system, don't be overly concerned by carrier and supplier reluctance because in the end, they will be thanking you for the initiative.

“We Can’t Afford to Refuse Loads so Why Bother Scheduling?”

I often hear this objection from warehouse managers; “we can’t implement a rigorous scheduling process because we would never refuse a load anyways.”

Large retailers, for example, can impose strict guidelines and will in fact refuse to receive trucks if an appointment hasn’t been made. Due to their bargaining power with their vendors, they’re also able to impose penalties on late arrivals or those who don’t meet the entire criterion listed in their merchandising/receiving policy.

This is not the case for most warehouses, particularly contract and public warehouses. Even if the loads don’t all arrive with an appointment pre-booked, many realize the benefits of scheduling. Scheduling is foremost about planning, and although it would be ideal to have 100% of the loads booked by appointment, it isn’t absolutely necessary.

How to manage unplanned arrivals

If you can estimate the percentage of loads that do not book appointments, then you can start by including some buffer (time slots) into your schedule to accommodate them. In reality, having 70 to 90 percent of the loads arrive with an appointment should be sufficiently high enough to prevent congestion and driver wait times. Keep in mind that the higher the volumes, the greater the burden unplanned arrivals will have on your dock operations.

Normally, a good scheduling tool will also provide you the means to track, among many KPIs, arrival times, unplanned arrivals, and no shows. This information will allow you to track the percentage of loads that arrive without an appointment. You should be able to determine whether there are common characteristics between all these, such as product classes (i.e.: fresh produce), load types (i.e.: floor loaded or breakdown loads) and supplier groups. With this information, you’ll be able to work with your supply chain partners to find ways improve the appointment rate.

The use of reserved time slots (standing or recurring appointments) for preferred carriers or couriers is also a means to manage regular inbound shipments for companies that refuse or can’t provide advanced appointment notification.

The data obtained through a scheduling tool will help you build reports on historical arrival times and also give you the basis to build trend reports. These trend reports are the best tools to work with your supply chain partners in order to improve performance, including the percentage of appointment bookings.

Therefore don’t let a few exceptions prevent you from considering initiatives that would improve the efficiency of your dock operations.

“I Don't Need A Dock Appointment Scheduling Because I Deal With A 3PL”

I recently had a customer satisfaction meeting with the director of IT services at one of our 3PL customers; a top 100 third-party logistics provider in the United States. I was impressed by his mission statement as it relates to his contract and public warehousing activities:

- 1 3PLs need to provide savings to their customers.
- 2 3PLs require visibility on all the goods in transit and in storage in order to provide a seamless information conduit between its customer and its customers' suppliers and clients.

Traditionally, receiving goods, managing orders and providing visibility on whether the goods have arrived or left the warehouse required a dedicated team of customer service representatives (CSRs) who kept the customer abreast of all these activities. For sites with considerable volume (20 appointments per day or more), CSRs end up spending a disproportionate amount of time managing appointment requests, be they for inbound or outbound shipments. This is understandable given that, when a company decides to outsource its warehousing activities, information becomes a life line to ensure that the operation is running smoothly.

The customer explained how, simply by providing better visibility and streamlined communication, he had transformed his operation.

With a web-based dock scheduling portal all parties had access to the information that was most relevant to them.

Now his customer has instant visibility on appointment bookings, pick-up times, and duration as well as instant email notifications for appointment confirmations and completed pick-ups. In addition, reporting tools allow the warehouse managers to have visibility on incoming volumes relative to capacity and labor availability, and the customer can now evaluate the carriers' and suppliers' performance – at the press of a button.

Regarding savings, due the growing acceptance of cloud based software applications, tools such as these are so cost efficient that they usually pay for themselves in 6 months or less. Phone calls and emails, usually in the thousands, are reduced by up to 90% when the web portals are used. Not only is the public warehouse operator reducing his costs but also he is providing more and better information to his customers.

“Carriers Won’t Respect the Appointment Time”

“You know how to take the reservation you just don’t know how to HOLD the reservation and that’s really the most important part of the reservation – the holding...”

We’ve all seen the infamous Seinfeld episode where Jerry rants at the car rental attendant on the most important aspect of a reservation – the holding of the reservation. I’m sure those of you that manage warehouses have felt like using that same speech to drivers on the importance of RESPECTING reservations on the dock. To avoid these types of scenarios you need to consider implementing a dock scheduling system. Making carriers and vendors accountable is one of the key benefits of implementing a dock scheduling system.

Drivers showing up late for appointments often mean that unloading crews will be less productive and potentially will push work to the end of the shift, which ultimately results in overtime fees. More importantly, the reason you requested product to be delivered at a certain time is because the business needed that product in the morning, not at the end of the day.

If carriers or suppliers are not respecting appointment times, what else are they doing wrong? How many suppliers are not palletizing the product in the manner you have requested or not labeling pallets as specified in their agreements with your merchandisers.

Conversely, when your operation doesn’t respect the appointment you provided your driver, your warehouse yard becomes congested with waiting drivers; risking that carriers charge you detention fees for delaying their driver.

The solution is to implement a dock scheduling system in order to provide the necessary KPIs to help you evaluate your supply chain partners:

- 1 Measuring the timeliness of the shipment with arrival, unload and departure times.
- 2 Auditing on the quality of the shipment; capturing incorrect paperwork, damaged goods, badly loaded trailers and containers.
- 3 An appointment history report; tracing who booked, changed or cancelled the appointment.

In the words of Jerry Seinfeld,

“Anyone can take a reservation”, but...

...only a dock scheduling system can provide you the tools to encourage your supply chain partners to **hold** the reservations.

“My Vendors Will Never Buy Into the New Scheduling Process”

It's always great to have the opportunity to talk about how technology can drive efficiency throughout the supply chain. This time around, it isn't about how much savings our customers obtain when implementing C3 Reservations, our online dock scheduling system – it's about how their vendors benefit. In fact, this story is a great testimony about good practices that trickle down and help the entire supply chain.

The Old Way

This is the case of a distribution manager working for a manufacturer who supplies products to a major retailer in Canada. As you would expect, all these retailers require that appointments be booked at the DCs and at the stores for direct store deliveries (DSDs). Obviously, all suppliers have come to accept this as being part of doing business. Most retailers' appointment process involves calling or emailing the respective warehouse or store.

This manufacturer outsources the transportation of the goods to a core of 10-12 carriers, although the total number can reach up to 50 carriers. Furthermore, they delegate the appointment taking responsibility to the carriers as part of the service but expect accountability and accuracy (ensuring that expected-delivery-dates (EDDs) are respected). Unfortunately, the carriers aren't always able to book the appointments and deliver on time.

Some of the more common causes included:

- 1 The customer didn't have capacity on the given day
- 2 The customer didn't return the phone calls or emails early enough for them to book the appointment on time.

This more often than not results in them being late on deliveries, potentially being penalized by their customer; certainly causing negative consequences and extra work for the distribution team.

The New Way

Things changed for this distribution manager when one of his customers started using C3 Reservations. He and his respective carriers were now required to book appointments online! No more phone calls; no more emails. From that point on, a carrier could no longer use the excuse that the customer didn't respond to their call/email. If they did, the distribution manager would immediately go online and;

- 1 Check DC and store receiving availability in order to confirm the carrier's statement
- 2 Confirm the status of the appointment request (accepted or pending) in addition to checking when the appointment request was made (its history).

By making full use of the online dock scheduling software, the distribution manager was able to enforce accountability and distinguish between valid booking delays versus misconduct on the part of the carrier. Performance reports would, on the one hand, defend the supplier against late arrivals due to the customer's warehouse capacity and on the other hand, prove the carrier's misconduct and make them accountable for any penalties that may have been applied by the customer.

Thus the new way of requesting appointments not only saves time, but also improves the on-time delivery rates and accountability. These are indirect benefits obtained because their customer, for reasons specific to their business reality, decided to implement an automated appointment scheduling tool.

A truly great example on how good technology can provide savings across the supply chain.

“A Dock Scheduling Software is Too Expensive”

If you are reading these words, chances are you are looking for ways to optimize your current appointment management process. You might be in the process of evaluating some off-the-shelf dock appointment scheduling systems available and perhaps considering building an in-house system.

Of course you are checking a list of features: web access, automated email confirmations, integration capabilities, etc. – but you also have budgetary considerations and need to establish a return on investment. For this you need the answer to this question:

How much is your company currently spending on dock appointment management every year?
Is it as simple as adding up your schedulers' wages?
Most probably not as these employees typically do not spend 100% of their time managing appointments as such and typically participate in the receiving process.

Here are some matters you may wish to consider in your calculation.

✓ Back-and-Forth Communications

Determining how much time your schedulers spend on the phone or reading/answering/sorting emails and faxes for a single appointment and applying this to the number of appointments you process every week could be a good starting point. As you will see in our evaluation below, this task can be extremely time-consuming.

Forget the exceptions and the complicated internal queries. We are referring here to time spent managing routine requests, perhaps even confirming standing appointments; basically time that could easily be saved by implementing an automated process.

For more information on evaluating the true cost of scheduling, we invite you to consult [C3 Solutions' ROI Calculator](#).

✓ System Updates

For every appointment taken, what systems need to be updated? For most companies the answer will be the schedule itself (calendar, spreadsheet) and another system such as a WMS. How much time does that take?

✓ Change Requests

The above scenario refers to straight-forward appointments. In reality, what percentage of appointments actually get rescheduled or cancelled? How many calls or emails are then generated? How many systems and spreadsheets need to be amended?

✓ Internal Communications

Appointment scheduling takes place in between the purchasing process and the receiving process. This often translates into a black hole for the information systems in place so many stakeholders – buyers, customer service reps, managers – thus rely on the schedulers to give them an up-to-date status on the expected delivery dates. How come that product was not delivered yesterday? Did the carrier reschedule? Answering these queries, again, takes time.

✓ Reporting

Another aspect of appointment scheduling is reporting. So a schedule was built; but how did it actually execute? Did carriers show up? Were they on time? Were there issues with the loads or the paperwork? Gathering and reconciling this information from various sources can be extremely time-consuming.

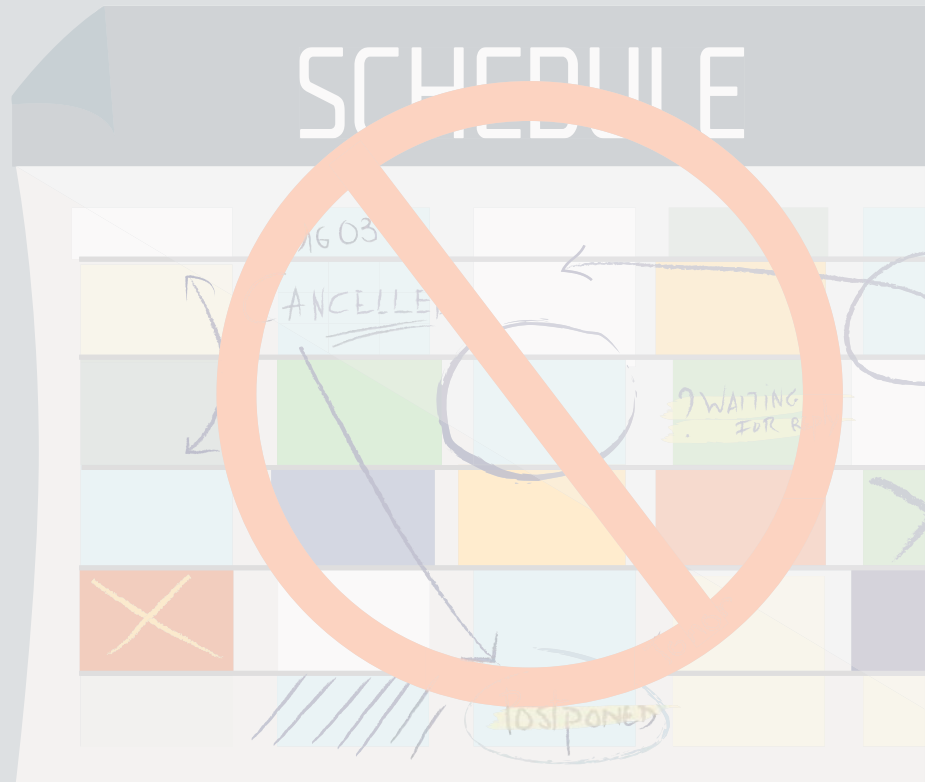
✓ Detention Fees and overtime

Poor planning or lack thereof can create excessive driver wait times, thus putting your business at the risk of paying detention fees. Similarly, receiving loads at the end of a shift may require you to pay overtime labor for stock put away.

In Closing

Myths are a never-ending story, but your scheduling challenges shouldn't be. C3 Solutions prides itself in providing businesses the resources to eliminate the myths related to dock scheduling. We invite you to consult our **Resource Center** for whitepapers and eBooks regarding scheduling, reporting, compliance, auditing and scorecarding.

Our goal is simply to stop the scheduling madness!



About C3 Solutions

C3 Solutions is a leading provider of software solutions dedicated to the area of **yard management** and **dock scheduling**.

C3's customers are fortune 1000 companies in the retail, manufacturing, transportation and post and parcel industries. C3's products include its award winning yard management software, Yard Smart and its on-demand dock scheduling system - **C3 Reservations**.

Founded in 2000 and based in Montreal QC, C3 Solutions has customers in the United States, Canada and Europe.

For more information on C3's products, schedule a **free online demonstration**:

[VISIT OUR WEBSITE](#)