

TRUCKING MASTERY:

BUILDING A PROFITABLE BUSINESS THAT LASTS

WEBINAR 4 OF 6

SMART FREIGHT STRATEGY

A large, stylized graphic of red and white chevrons (zig-zag lines) that forms a mountain-like shape, rising from the bottom left towards the top right. The chevrons are composed of multiple parallel lines, creating a sense of depth and movement.

WORKBOOK

TRUCKING MASTERY:

Building A Profitable Business That Lasts

Welcome to Your Roadmap for Mastering the Business of Trucking

This workbook series is designed to support the full **Trucking Mastery: Building a Profitable Business That Lasts** webinar experience. Rather than one all-inclusive workbook, this year's approach breaks the journey into six focused workbooks, each aligned with a single webinar and a specific phase of business growth.

Each workbook is meant to be used in real time—during and after each session—to capture insights, clarify priorities, and turn ideas into action. The goal isn't to overwhelm you with information, but to help you apply what matters most, one step at a time.

Throughout the series, Kevin Rutherford and Brent Hutto focus on helping **owner-operators, carriers, and small fleet owners** move beyond survival mode and into long-term, sustainable business ownership. You'll work through strategy, numbers, market timing, freight selection, broker relationships, and smart growth—always with profitability, clarity, and quality of life in mind.

Think of each workbook as a checkpoint. **Complete one, apply what you've learned, and then move forward stronger and more confident** than before. By the end of the series, you won't just understand your business better—you'll be running it with purpose and direction.

WORKSHEET #1

SMART FREIGHT STRATEGY

KNOW YOUR COST PER MILE

Your cost per mile is the floor every load is measured against. Fill this in with your real numbers, not estimates.

Fixed monthly costs (these hit whether you drive or not)Truck and trailer payment: Insurance: Permits, plates, licenses: ELD and subscriptions: Parking and other fixed: **Fixed total:** **Variable monthly costs**Fuel: Maintenance and repairs: Tires: Tolls and DEF: **Variable total:** **Your pay and profit target:** **Cost per mile**Total monthly cost (fixed + variable + pay): Miles driven this month: Cost per mile equals total cost divided by miles: **WRITE THIS NUMBER LARGE—IT IS YOUR BREAK-EVEN FLOOR.**

WORKSHEET #2

SMART FREIGHT STRATEGY

THE ALL-IN LOAD EVALUATION

Never judge a load by the rate on the screen. Judge the effective rate after empty miles.

Load pay (total dollars):

Loaded miles:

Deadhead miles to pickup:

Total miles (loaded plus deadhead):

Effective rate equals load pay divided by total miles:

Your cost per mile from Worksheet 1:

Profit per mile equals effective rate minus cost per mile:

If profit per mile is zero or negative, the load costs you money to run. Move on.

NOTES:

WORKSHEET #3

SMART FREIGHT STRATEGY

THE LANE SCORECARD

Score the lane, not just the load. Mark each yes or no.

Effective rate is above your cost per mile:	☐ YES	☐ NO
Destination is a market with outbound freight:	☐ YES	☐ NO
Reload likely within a day:	☐ YES	☐ NO
Timing avoids a costly sit or tight appointment:	☐ YES	☐ NO
Lane is repeatable or builds a relationship:	☐ YES	☐ NO

SCORE	RECOMMENDATION
4-5 Yes	Strong Load
3 Yes	Proceed Carefully
0-2 Yes	Usually a Trap

NOTES:

WORKSHEET #4

SMART FREIGHT STRATEGY

RELOAD AND BACKHAUL CHECK

A load out is only half the trip. Plan the return before you commit.

How many outbound loads does the destination market show?

Typical wait to get reloaded there:

Backup lane if the first choice falls through:

Does this become a triangle or round trip?

☐

YES

☐

NO

NOTES:

WORKSHEET #5

SMART FREIGHT STRATEGY

WEEKLY CONSISTENCY PLANNER

Plan the week, not the load. Predictable income beats occasional big rates.

Two or three lanes you can run repeatedly:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Brokers or shippers worth building a relationship with:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Target profit for the week **(not gross)**:

Home time you are protecting this week:

NOTES:

WORKSHEET #6

SMART FREIGHT STRATEGY

BURNOUT CHECK

The most miles is not the most money. Check yourself before chasing.

Am I choosing this load for net profit or just for the big rate?

What will this week cost in fuel, tires, and hours?

FUEL:

TIRES:

HOURS:

Is my weekly net going up or just my odometer?

Am I protecting rest and home time, or trading them for gross?

WORKSHEET #7

SMART FREIGHT STRATEGY

MY COMMITMENTS

Write down what changes on Monday.

The one habit I will start:

My cost per mile is:

The lane I want to make repeatable:

The number I check before every load:

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SMART FREIGHT STRATEGY

You've just taken another step toward building a more profitable trucking business.

The most successful carriers don't chase every load—they choose the right loads. Every freight decision should strengthen your business, not just keep your truck moving.

Remember these key takeaways:

- Know your cost per mile before evaluating any load.
- Look beyond the posted rate—consider deadhead, reload potential, timing, and consistency.
- Plan the entire trip, not just the outbound load.
- Build repeatable lanes that support long-term profitability.
- Protect your time and your margins by choosing freight that fits your business strategy.

You're not doing this alone. **Truckstop.com** provides the market data and tools to help you make smarter freight decisions, while **Let's Truck** provides the education, coaching, and business resources to help you build a profitable business that lasts.

Next Up: Learn how strong broker relationships can lead to better communication, better freight opportunities, and more consistent profitability.

CHOOSE SMARTER | BUILD STRONGER | DRIVE PROFIT

