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Volume 16
Issue 1

2019

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28 **Negotiation Tips for Expeditors**

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Expedite Now is written for professional owner operators and drivers working in the expedited trucking industry.

Our editorial policy encompasses informing drivers, fleet managers and carriers of the news and information about the expedited trucking community.

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FEATURE

If you're new to expedited trucking or a fleet owner looking to expand, a used expeditor straight truck can save you money upfront. But it also brings big risks that could sink your business if you're not careful.

6 MISTAKES TO AVOID

When Purchasing a Used Expediter Straight Truck

By Sean M. Lyden, Staff Writer

So, how can you improve your odds of making a smart purchase decision—and protect your financial future? Avoid these six mistakes when shopping for a used truck.

MISTAKE #1. CHOOSING AN UNDERSIZED ENGINE.

The engine size is crucial to determining whether the truck will last long enough to be suitable for your needs. That's because a Class-7 medium-duty engine is rated for about 300,000 miles, while the bigger Class-8 heavy-duty engine (like the Detroit DD13) is built to last a million or more miles.

The temptation is to choose a truck with the smaller engine because you can get it for a significantly lower price. But if you're evaluating two straight trucks—one with the Class-7 and the other with the larger motor—and they both have 250,000 miles on them, you're looking at a wide gap between those trucks in terms of the usable life remaining.

That's because the medium-duty engine with 250,000 miles has only one or two years at most left on it, while the Class-8 engine with the same mileage could last another five to six years in most expedited trucking applications.

That difference in engine size—and longevity—could make or break your business.

MISTAKE #2. OVERLOOKING ENGINE HOURS.

It's one thing to look at the miles, but the engine hours could also make a big impact on how much life you can expect out of the truck you're about to purchase.

Engine hours refer to the amount of time the engine runs, including when the truck is idle. And although the engine isn't under a heavy load to propel the truck when idling, it's still encountering wear and tear that's not reflected in the engine miles.

"One thing I do [when we take a truck in on trade] is look up the engine hours and calculate the percentage of how much those hours are idle time," says Nathan Meyer, expeditor sales at Stoops Freightliner-Quality Trailer (truckcountry.com).

What percentage would be a good rule of thumb to look for?

"You want to see that number as low as possible, somewhere in the 10 to 15-percent range would be really good."

MISTAKE #3. NOT CONSIDERING DIESEL PARTICULATE FILTER (DPF) MAINTENANCE.

When was the DPF last serviced?

This is important to know because if it has been a while since the DPF was cleaned, you'll need to factor that maintenance cost into your decision.

"I would recommend when you're buying a used truck to get proof that the filter has been cleaned. And if it has not, go ahead and clean it," advises Bobby Snyder, sales representative, Fyda Freightliner Columbus (www.fydafreightliner.com)

What does that typically cost?

Snyder says that DPF maintenance ranges anywhere from \$800 to \$1,800.

"When we take a truck in on trade, we ask for proof that the DPF has been cleaned. If

that has been done in the last 100,000 to 150,000 miles, we tell the purchaser and provide them that paperwork," says Snyder.

Says Meyer, "If the owner doesn't have any records of the DPF being replaced or cleaned, you can take it into a shop like ours at the dealership, and we can hook up to the computer and tell how much life is left in the filter. [The report] will give you a percentage based on how full the filters are. It doesn't necessarily translate into how long you'll be able to run the truck but at least you know about where the truck falls in the lifecycle of the filter."

MISTAKE #4. NEGLECTING DOWNSIDE PLANNING.

When you're purchasing a used truck, you're taking a risk. And you won't have much, if any, factory warranty left to cover catastrophic component failures. So, if the truck breaks down six months to a year from now, do you have enough cash to pay for the repairs—and keep your business afloat during that downtime?

"If the previous owner didn't maintain the truck and it needs a few items fixed, you can rack up pretty healthy bills at any service department," says Snyder.

Meyer agrees, "One big repair and that could wipe you out before you even get started in the business."

How much cash should you put away? "Build up a maintenance fund of about 10-cents per mile, and as the truck gets older I'd increase that amount," Snyder advises. "Having enough cash on hand to operate your business and not just acquire your equipment is something that you really need to consider before buying the truck."

MISTAKE #5. TRYING TO REINVENT THE WHEEL.

Snyder says that he has seen some inexperienced expeditors try to "reinvent

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

the wheel” by modifying a truck instead of purchasing one that was built originally for the expedited trucking industry.

”They’ll say, ‘I think I’m going to buy a tractor and stretch it and put my own box on it.’ But then you’ve got to pay somebody cash to stretch the chassis and buy a box for it,” says Snyder. “I’ve seen some pretty shoddy equipment out there on the roads, especially if they try and save a couple dollars along the way instead of doing it once and doing it right. There’s enough used equipment out there right now that was designed specifically for the expediting industry. So I think that’s where you should focus your attention.”

MISTAKE #6. NOT CONSIDERING CARRIER REQUIREMENTS.

You purchased a truck only to discover that you’ll need to invest more money into it to meet your carrier’s specifications. And those modifications can get expensive.

“Make sure that you clearly understand what your carrier wants and then verify that the trucks fit those parameters or qualifications before you make the purchase,” says Meyer.

THE BOTTOM LINE

While a used truck can help you save money upfront, it also increases your risk of unexpected surprises that could cost you more than you expect down the road. So avoid these six mistakes to increase your likelihood of purchasing a good reliable used truck that will help you operate cost-effectively and grow your business for years to come. **EN**

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TOP MISTAKES TO AVOID

When Spec'ing Your Next Custom Sleeper

By Sean M. Lyden, Staff Writer



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INDUSTRY

When you invest six figures in a new expediter truck, you don't want any regrets.

Photographs courtesy of Bolt Custom Trucks



That's

especially the case when spec'ing a custom sleeper for your truck where your goal is to balance comfort and cost. After all, your truck is your home away from home, so comfort is essential. But your truck is also a tool to generate revenue for your business. And the more you pay to accommodate amenities you might want, the less profit you get to keep.

So, how can you ensure your next custom sleeper strikes the right balance between comfort and cost and reduces your risk of regret? Avoid making these three mistakes.

MISTAKE #1: NOT THINKING THROUGH ALL ASPECTS OF YOUR DESIGN UPFRONT.

You've ordered the truck and then see someone else's vehicle and think, "Oh wait! This is what I want in mine!"

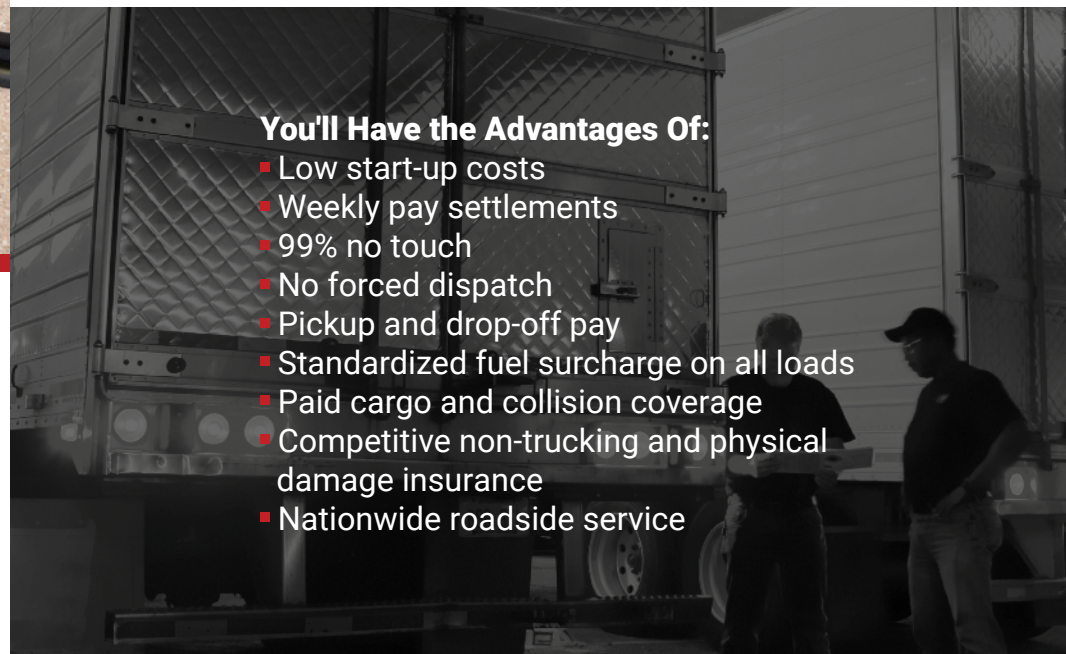
But now your truck is so far along in the build process that to make changes would significantly increase the cost and might delay delivery.

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operators by asking questions like:

What would you say were the “must-haves” for your sleeper when you ordered your truck—and why?

What options did you wish you had ordered for your sleeper that you’ll definitely put in your next truck?

Is there anything we haven’t discussed that you think I should keep in mind as we spec our sleeper?

MISTAKE #2: CUTTING CORNERS UPFRONT, PAYING MORE LATER.

Bonnie Fielding, sales manager with Bolt Custom Trucks and Manufacturing (www.

boltcustom.com), shares an example of a common mistake she has seen.

The customer wants a 120-inch sleeper with a bathroom but, to stick within a specific budget, they’ll cut corners by going with a smaller generator. After all, the sleeper isn’t equipped with all the amenities right now that would require a larger generator.

But then things change. “They’ll come back six months or a year later and say, ‘You know what? I want to add the cooktop and maybe slap on a microwave or a convection microwave,” says Fielding. “They already have the air conditioner, and now they’re adding two other components that require more power. So they need a larger generator which was only a couple thousand dollars more up front. Now they have a generator they don’t want and will need to pay about \$13,000 on a new generator.”

In other words, the \$2,000 to \$3,000 upgrade cost for the larger generator on the front end would have saved them about 5 to 6 times after the fact.

“Cutting corners for just a couple of thousand dollars isn’t going to change your payment much, so don’t cut back on the important stuff you think you might need down the road,” says Fielding.

To avoid making this mistake, ask yourself these questions as you evaluate your sleeper spec:

Is there at least a remote possibility that I would want to upgrade down the road?

What is the upgrade cost now vs. what it would cost me later?

Why would I want to make that upgrade?

Do these reasons present a compelling

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MISTAKE #3: SPEC'ING THE SLEEPER WITHOUT RESALE IN MIND

Brian Callan, president of Bolt, says that another common mistake is when a customer wants to build a truck to the specific preferences of one driver without thinking about how that would impact the truck's marketability and resale value later.

"If the customer is an owner-operator or fleet owner with a request that's very specific to one set of drivers, then when they now try to sell that truck or offer it to the next set of drivers, that specific request may not be as desirable for the new drivers," says Callan.

For example, when should you add a shower/toilet combination?

That depends on the sleeper size.

"If you put in a 100-inch sleeper, a shower/toilet combo gives you very little wardrobe storage to hang clothes up. So, the next set of drivers that you put in that truck may say, 'You know what? I don't ever use the bathroom. I'd rather have that

as a wardrobe cabinet and have more storage," says Callan.

What size sleeper would be more appropriate for the shower/toilet combo?

"In my experience in expediting, the threshold appears to be around a 120-inch sleeper," says Callan. "If you have smaller than that, it's usually preferable to maximize the storage space and go without the shower/toilet. If you have the 120-inch or larger sleeper, then the preference is to have that combo."

The challenge occurs when you deviate from those norms. "If somebody has their trucks set up in a way that's desirable for them but not for the majority of people, that doesn't mean they're right or wrong. It's their truck. But if they want to maximize the lifetime value of that truck, then they should be thinking of the next owner, the next driver of that truck," says Callan.

To avoid this mistake, ask yourself questions like these:

Is there anything in my sleeper spec that deviates from the market norms—that could negatively impact resale value?

What specs would help expand my resale options without breaking the bank upfront?

If I invest the money in including those upgrades, about how much more marketable or valuable will my truck be? In other words, is it really worth it?

THE BOTTOM LINE

Be clear about what you want in a custom sleeper. Research your options while keeping comfort, upfront cost, and long-term resale value in mind. Seek advice from other expeditors and learn from their mistakes—to save yourself the money and headaches with your own purchase. **EN**

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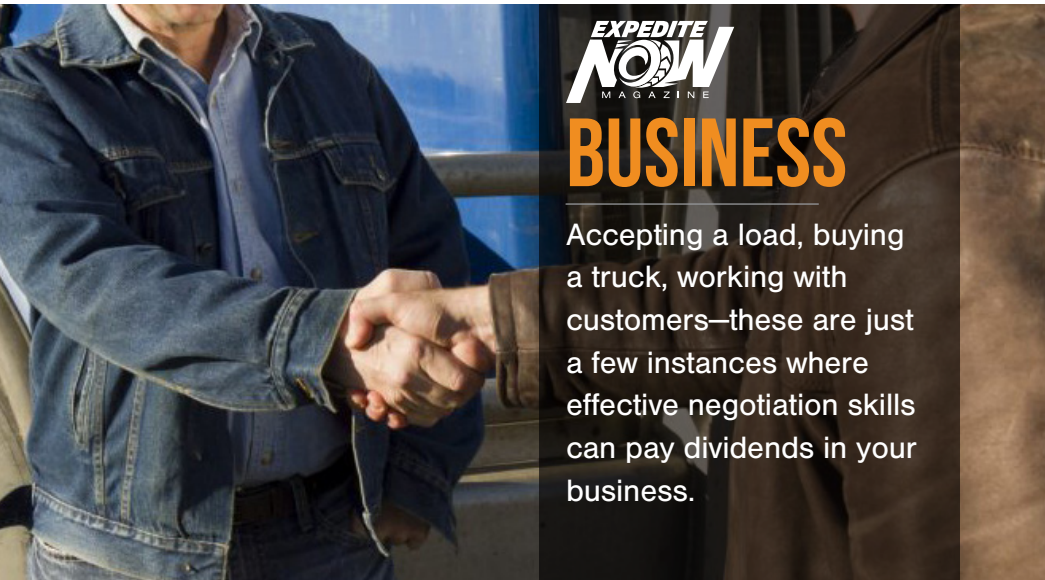
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Negotiation Tips for Expeditors

By Sean M. Lyden, Staff Writer



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BUSINESS

Accepting a load, buying a truck, working with customers—these are just a few instances where effective negotiation skills can pay dividends in your business.

But good negotiation is not about getting all you can at the expense of the other party. Instead, negotiation should be more like collaboration to arrive at an outcome that both sides can feel good about.

At least that's the perspective of successful team expeditors like Bob and Linda Caffee and Jason and Heather Hutchens. Here are three tips they recommend for win-win negotiations.

TIP #1. BE FAIR.

Sure, you want to get the best deal, but not at the risk of damaging long-term relationships with brokers or vendors who

you'll need to work with down the road. Otherwise, you may "win" the negotiation that day, but you'll lose in the long run.

The idea here is to think: "How can I get what I want in this situation while also helping the other person get what they want?"

"My goal when negotiating a load with a broker or dispatch is to be fair because I want that person to use me again," says Linda Caffee. "If the load is offered too low or I have to deadhead too far to get to it, I'll propose something along the lines of, 'I want this much money to run it, and I'll do it all,' or I'll ask, 'What can you give me?' And then we'll talk from there. This way, I can see if they even have the money to pay me to do it. And if they don't, maybe we get

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creative. I might take this load for you if you have something that will back it up—if I can get my income back up where it needs to be. Then you're both in a win-win situation."

In other words, negotiate with the long-term relationship in mind. "I think my philosophy in negotiation is being fair, knowing you have to use this person later down the road. So you really don't want to burn them," says Caffee.

TIP #2. BE A PROFESSIONAL.

If you don't like a proposal presented to you, don't be offended and take it personally. Simply be a professional and ask for what you want. If you can't strike a win-win deal, that's okay. You can walk away—no harm, no foul.

What's an example?

Jason Hutchens, who you might know, along with his wife Heather, from their popular Youtube Channel "The Crafty Trucker," offers this scenario.

"A lot of times you have a dispatcher or agent who will call you up and say, 'Hey, I really need your help to get this load covered. This is what it pays.' It's then up to us to figure out if what they're offering is enough. And a lot of times it's not enough," says Hutchens. "That's when you really have to know your operating expenses—what it costs you to run in order to be able to negotiate a fair rate for you. So you've got to know your operating costs and what moves you'll have to make once deliveries are complete to be able to negotiate that fair rate for yourself."

If you need a higher rate to accept the load, how do you negotiate that? What approach should you take?

You could tell them, "Look. This is what I'm willing to do it for. Take it or leave it!"

But a more effective approach would be to act in a professional manner, clearly communicating what you need to make the deal acceptable to you, while also keeping the other party's interests in mind.

"I really just explain the situation to the agent or the broker," says Hutchens. "I tell them, 'Well, after I deliver that load to Seattle, I'm not going to get anything out of there, and I'm going to have to get to California. In order for me to be able to help you with this, I will need enough money to be able to cover those expenses. Here's what I would need.'"

If you can get what you ask for, great. If not, that's okay, too. At least you asked in a professional way to try to make a deal happen. And more often than not, you'll get it.

TIP #3. BE PROACTIVE.

Supposed you're held up at the customer's site, delaying you from getting to your next load. You can sit there and fume about it. Or, you could be proactive and propose solutions to the problem.

"I would say something like, 'Hey would it help you at all if I put the freight on the dock for you? I'll use my pallet jack and set it on the dock,'" says Caffee.

And don't merely accept a bad deal out of fear of rejection. Know what you want and be proactive about asking for it.

How? Hutchens offers this example.

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"Let's say I have to wait four hours to get offloaded. Typically there's going to be a contracted rate with that customer in order to get that kind of business from those bigger customers. And, usually, that's not negotiable," says Hutchens. "But if I'm told ahead of time that, 'Hey, this delivery is going to require you to break down all the pallets, dolly all the pallets inside, and stack them in a particular place for the customer,' that's when I know that the job will be labor intensive, and we should get paid for that extra time."

So, how do you ask for the money?

"I'll ask them, 'What is your typical contractor rate for that?' If it's a number too low for me to make it worth doing, I will tell them, 'Well, I'm going to need this much to do it.' And we come to an agreement ahead of time."

THE BOTTOM LINE

As an expeditor, you'll need to negotiate with a wide range of people to help you get what you want and need for your business to succeed. But as you negotiate, also think about how you can help the other person get what they want. Otherwise, as Caffee puts it, "You could win that one time, and get one hell of a great load or deal, but in the long run, you're the loser because they won't work with you again." **EN**



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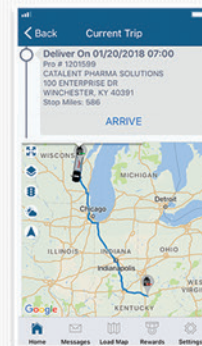
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Brian 706-832-4223

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Adam 419-297-3773

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Robert 219-924-2596

I am looking for straight truck and sprinter van drivers. I have an opening for a ram pro master 3500 and an opening for a team driver in a straight truck. Leased to XPO.

Tony 864-557-3943

I am looking for an experienced driver for a 2018 Ford Transit Van leased to Barrett Directline. Must be 25 years old with clean driving record and clean background.

Tammy 936-208-9900

I need somebody to team with me in a non CDL truck. Male or Female in the surrounding area of Knoxville all you need is to be drug free and have a regular license and a DOT physical card and be able to stay out 3 or 4 weeks

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FB FLATBED	SV SPRINTER VANS
	TS TEAMS

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