WRITTEN EXCLUSIVELY FOR 3PL PROFESSIONALS

The 3PL Partner's Guide to *Intermodal Freight*

How to offer best-in-class intermodal capacity to your customers — without building the railroad relationships yourself.

- Why your customers deserve a true IMC — not another broker layer
- How direct railroad contracts protect your margin and your reputation
- Capacity when it matters most — when markets get tight
- White-label partnerships that make your team look great
- The East Coast Repositioning Program — a margin opportunity most 3PLs miss
- US–Canada cross-border — the lane most 3PLs outsource wrong
- How to grow your intermodal book of business

Direct IMC
IMCs in the US with direct contracts across Class I railroads across North America

18+
Years of intermodal expertise — with railroad relationships dating to the early 2000s

$0
Broker markup between your customers and the railroad

Intermodal Freight Simplified. Service Amplified.

Table of Contents

This guide is written specifically for 3PL professionals — not shippers learning intermodal for the first time. We assume you understand the basics. What this guide addresses is the more important question: **how do you build a reliable, profitable intermodal offering for your customers without the overhead of direct railroad relationships?**

1

CHAPTER ONE

Why 3PLs Need a True IMC Partner

Not another broker layer. A direct railroad relationship working for you.

If you've offered intermodal to your customers and the results were underwhelming — rates that weren't competitive, capacity that disappeared in tight markets, service issues that landed on your desk — the problem almost certainly wasn't intermodal. It was the provider you were working through.

Most companies offering intermodal capacity to 3PLs are freight brokers who purchase that capacity from an IMC, mark it up, and resell it to you. You then mark it up again before selling to your customer. By the time your customer sees the rate, two or three margins have been stacked on top of the railroad's actual price — and the result is a rate that isn't competitive enough to consistently win the business.

The IMC Difference — What It Actually Means for You

An **Intermodal Marketing Company (IMC)** holds direct contracts with Class I railroads. LaserNet Jax is a direct IMC in the United States with direct railroad contracts plus access to the full North American rail network — CSX, Norfolk Southern, Union Pacific, CN, and CP Rail. When you partner with LaserNet Jax, there is exactly one margin between the railroad and your customer: yours.

Structure	LaserNet Jax (Direct IMC)	Typical Broker Offering Intermodal
Railroad contract	✓ Direct — LaserNet Jax	✗ Via IMC intermediary
Margin layers	✓ One — yours only	✗ Two or more stacked
Rate competitiveness	✓ Railroad-direct pricing	✗ Marked up from IMC rate
Capacity access	✓ Allocated railroad capacity	✗ Subject to IMC availability
Problem resolution	✓ Direct to railroad	✗ Through intermediary chain
Rate stability	✓ Contract-based	✗ Spot market dependent

What This Means for Your Customer Relationships

When you offer intermodal capacity backed by direct railroad contracts, you can quote rates that are genuinely competitive with anything your customers will find in the market. When a capacity problem arises — and they do arise in intermodal, just as in OTR — you have a partner with the railroad relationships to solve it, not just someone who can make calls on your behalf.

Your customers don't need to know who LaserNet Jax is. They need to know that their freight moved, the rate was right, and you delivered. That's exactly how a true IMC partnership is designed to work.

> **THE 3PL VALUE PROPOSITION**
>
> You bring the customer relationships, the account management, and the service layer. LaserNet Jax brings the direct railroad contracts, the capacity, and the 25+ years of railroad relationships and 18+ years of drayage relationships built across every major rail ramp in North America. Together, you offer your customers something a broker simply cannot replicate — and you keep the margin that brokers are currently taking from you.

2

CHAPTER TWO

What Direct Contracts Mean for Your Customers' Rates

Better rates. More margin. Customers who stay.

The rate is almost always the first conversation in a 3PL-customer relationship. If your intermodal rates aren't consistently competitive, you lose the business — or you never get it in the first place. Understanding exactly how railroad-direct pricing flows through to your customers is essential to building a profitable intermodal offering.

How the Rate Stack Works

Here's a concrete example of the same intermodal lane priced through two different provider structures — a direct IMC partnership versus a broker arrangement:

CHICAGO → ATLANTA · 720 MILES · RATE COMPARISON

Railroad base rate (direct IMC)	**$1,850**
LaserNet Jax margin (IMC direct)	+$250
Your cost from LaserNet Jax	**$2,100**
Your 3PL margin to customer	+$300
Customer pays	**$2,400**
Same lane via broker (extra margin layer)	+$200-350 more
Customer pays via broker route	**$2,600-2,750**

That $200–350 difference on every load is the cost of working through a broker instead of a direct IMC. On a customer moving 20 loads per month, that's $4,000–$7,000 per month — $48,000–$84,000 per year — in rates that are either eroding your margin or making you uncompetitive.

Protecting Your Margin While Offering Better Rates

The goal of a direct IMC partnership isn't to pass all the savings to your customer — it's to give you pricing flexibility that a broker arrangement doesn't allow. You can choose to:

- ✓ **Match the market rate** and capture more margin for yourself versus what you'd make through a broker
- ✓ **Price below the market** to win competitive bids you currently lose on rate
- ✓ **Offer rate stability** to customers who are frustrated by volatile spot pricing
- ✓ **Bundle intermodal** into broader freight management proposals at a blended rate advantage

> **THE MARGIN REALITY**
>
> 3PLs working through broker intermediaries on intermodal are often earning **$50–150 per load** on lanes where they should be earning **$200–350 per load**. The broker is taking the rest. A direct IMC partnership doesn't just improve your customer's rate — it dramatically improves your economics on every load.

3

CHAPTER THREE

Capacity: The Real Differentiator

Rates win the business. Capacity keeps it.

Every 3PL has had this experience: you quote a customer on intermodal, they approve the rate, and then your provider comes back and tells you the equipment isn't available. You scramble to find OTR coverage at a higher cost. Your customer remembers the failure, not the low quote. You lose the account — or lose the ability to sell intermodal to that customer again.

Capacity failure is the single biggest threat to a 3PL's intermodal program. And it almost always traces back to the same root cause: your intermodal provider doesn't have a direct relationship with the railroad.

Why Brokers Fail on Capacity

When markets tighten — during peak seasons, in the wake of supply chain disruptions, or when railroad volumes spike — capacity flows first to direct IMC contract holders. Brokers, who access capacity through IMCs on a secondary basis, are last in line. The loads that can't be covered are disproportionately the ones in broker hands.

HOW RAILROAD CAPACITY IS ALLOCATED

Railroads allocate equipment and train space based on contractual commitments. **Direct IMC contract holders like LaserNet Jax receive their contracted allocation regardless of market conditions.** Secondary market participants — brokers and intermediaries — receive what's left. In tight markets, what's left can be very little.

What 18+ Years of Drayage Relationships Mean

Rail capacity is one side of the intermodal equation. Drayage is the other. Even when rail capacity is available, a failed drayage pickup at origin or destination can derail an entire load. LaserNet Jax has spent 18+ years building carrier relationships (with railroad relationships dating to the early 2000s) at every major rail ramp in North America. These aren't load-board relationships — they're established partners who know our freight and prioritize our loads.

6
Class I railroads with direct contracts — full North American coverage

18+
Years of drayage carrier relationships at major rail ramps nationwide

1
Point of contact for every load — someone who picks up the phone

The Questions to Ask About Capacity

Q **When capacity is tight, how are your loads prioritized versus other customers?**

A direct IMC holds contracted rail allocation. A broker cannot give you a credible answer to this question because they don't control the allocation — the IMC they buy from does.

Q **What is your process when a drayage pickup fails at origin?**

Established drayage networks mean backup carriers are available and known. Load-board-dependent providers have no reliable fallback.

Q **Have you ever failed to cover a committed load? What happened?**

Every provider has had failures. The honest answer to this question reveals a great deal about how they handle adversity and whether they'll protect your customer relationship when things go wrong.

> *"We've been burned by intermodal providers before. LaserNet Jax is different. If there's ever an issue, they're already working on it before we even call."*
>
> R. KELLER · VP SUPPLY CHAIN · AUTO PARTS SUPPLIER

4

CHAPTER FOUR

How the Partnership Works

White-label, seamless, no drama. Exactly how a 3PL partnership should run.

The mechanics of a 3PL partnership with LaserNet Jax are straightforward. Here's exactly how it works from day one.

The Quoting Process

When a customer asks you for an intermodal rate, you contact your LaserNet Jax point of contact — one person, always the same person — with the lane details. We quote you a net rate. You apply your margin and present the rate to your customer under your company name. The entire process happens in minutes, not hours. You never need to explain where the capacity is coming from.

1

You receive a customer rate request

Origin, destination, commodity, load date, container size needed. Send it to your LaserNet Jax contact by phone, email, or text.

2

We quote you a net rate — within minutes

Built directly from our railroad contracts and drayage network. No broker markup. No waiting on someone else to quote us first.

3

You present the rate to your customer

Under your company name, at your chosen margin. Your customer sees you, not us, unless you choose otherwise.

4

We coordinate the entire move

Origin drayage, container delivery, rail booking, transit tracking, destination drayage, proof of delivery. All of it.

5

You invoice your customer. We invoice you.

Clean, separate billing. You capture your margin. We handle ours. Your customer relationship stays entirely yours.

White-Label Operations

LaserNet Jax operates as a behind-the-scenes partner by default. We do not contact your customers directly, solicit their freight independently, or compete with you for their business. Your customer relationships are yours. We provide the railroad access, capacity, and operational execution that makes your intermodal offering credible and reliable.

ONE POINT OF CONTACT — ALWAYS

When you work with LaserNet Jax, you work with one person who knows your customers, your preferred lanes, your service standards, and your margin requirements. No call centers. No rotating reps. No re-explaining your business every time you call. **This is what a real partnership looks like.**

Communication Standards

We commit to quotes within minutes during business hours, proactive communication on any in-transit issues before you need to ask, and same-day resolution of operational questions. If something goes wrong with a load, you'll hear about it from us before your customer calls you.

5

CHAPTER FIVE

The Lanes Your Customers Are Asking About

Where intermodal wins — and what to tell your customers.

Knowing which of your customers' lanes are strong intermodal candidates is the foundation of a successful 3PL intermodal program. The answer is simpler than most people think: any dry van freight moving 750+ miles on a consistent, planned basis is worth a conversation.

The Qualification Formula

When reviewing your customer base for intermodal candidates, look for four things: **distance** (750+ miles), **freight type** (dry van, palletized or boxed), **timing flexibility** (1–2 day buffer acceptable), and **volume consistency** (recurring loads on the same lane). Customers with 5+ loads per month on qualifying lanes represent meaningful savings for them — and meaningful revenue for you.

Top Performing Lanes

Southeast	→	Midwest (Chicago · Detroit · Columbus · Indianapolis)	**25%**	
Midwest	→	Northeast (New York · Boston · Philadelphia · Baltimore)	**22%**	
Any US City	→	Canada (Toronto · Montreal · Vancouver · Calgary)	**20%**	
East Coast	→	West Coast Ramps (LA · Oakland · Portland · Seattle · Vancouver BC)	**30%+**	Repositioning

* Estimated savings vs. comparable OTR trucking on qualifying lanes 750+ miles. Actual savings vary by lane, volume, and market conditions.

How to Present Intermodal to Your Customers

The most effective way to introduce intermodal to an existing customer isn't to make it about intermodal — it's to make it about savings. The conversation that works is simple:

> **THE CONVERSATION THAT WORKS**
>
> *"I've been reviewing your freight lanes and I've identified one where I think we can save you [X]% — around $[Y] per load. It runs on rail instead of truck, which takes about a day longer but is significantly less expensive and more reliable on capacity. Can I put a formal proposal together?"*
>
> This approach leads with savings, acknowledges the transit difference honestly, and frames intermodal as a tool you're bringing to them — not a product you're trying to sell.

Identifying Candidates in Your Current Book

- ✓ Pull a lane report for all customers with loads over 750 miles
- ✓ Filter for dry van freight only — exclude temp-controlled, flatbed, and oversized
- ✓ Sort by load volume — start with customers who have 10+ loads per month on a single lane
- ✓ Check for lanes where your customer has expressed rate sensitivity or solicited competitive bids
- ✓ Prioritize customers with ESG commitments — sustainability is an additional selling point

Send us that list. We'll run the lanes and come back to you with a quote on each one within the same business day.

6

CHAPTER SIX

US–Canada Cross-Border Intermodal

The lane most 3PLs outsource wrong — and how to do it right.

US–Canada cross-border intermodal is one of the most consistently profitable lanes in a 3PL's portfolio — and one of the most commonly mishandled. The complexity involved is real, but it's entirely manageable when your IMC partner has the right railroad relationships, customs expertise, and drayage network on both sides of the border.

Why Most 3PLs Get This Wrong

The typical 3PL approach to cross-border intermodal involves stitching together multiple providers — a US-side intermodal broker, a customs broker, a Canadian drayage contact, and sometimes a Canadian logistics partner. Each handoff is an opportunity for a miscommunication, a delay, or a charge you didn't quote your customer. Your margin gets compressed. Your customer gets a fragmented experience. And when something goes wrong, nobody owns it.

THE SINGLE-PROVIDER ADVANTAGE

LaserNet Jax holds direct contracts with both CN and CP Rail — the two Class I railroads operating in Canada — in addition to all four US Class I railroads. We coordinate customs, manage drayage on both sides of the border, and provide a single point of contact for the entire move. **Your customer gets one provider. You get one invoice. Nobody gets surprised.**

Top US–Canada Lane Opportunities

US Origin Region	Canadian Destinations	Railroad	Typical Savings vs OTR
Southeast (FL, GA, TN)	✓ **Toronto · Montreal**	CSX / CN	18–22%
Midwest (IL, OH, MI)	✓ **Toronto · Calgary**	NS / CP	20–25%
Northeast (NY, PA, NJ)	✓ **Montreal · Toronto**	CSX / CN	18–22%
Southwest (TX, OK)	✓ **Vancouver BC · Calgary**	UP / CP	20–26%
Any US City	✓ **Vancouver BC**	UP / CP	20–28%

What to Look for in a Cross-Border IMC

- ✓ Direct contracts with both CN and CP Rail — not just US carriers
- ✓ Established customs broker relationships on both sides of the border
- ✓ Proven drayage coverage at Canadian destination ramps (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary)
- ✓ Experience with your customers' commodity types and documentation requirements
- ✓ Single-invoice billing that makes your accounting straightforward

Selling Cross-Border to Your Customers

Many shippers with regular US–Canada freight lanes have never been offered intermodal on those lanes — because most 3PLs either don't offer it or have had bad experiences with it. That creates an opportunity for you to bring something genuinely differentiated to the conversation. A customer moving 15 loads per month from the Southeast to Toronto on OTR trucking is almost certainly paying more than they need to. With LaserNet Jax behind you, you can offer them a credible, reliable intermodal alternative — and win the business.

7

CHAPTER SEVEN

The East Coast Repositioning Program

A margin opportunity most 3PLs have never heard of.

Of all the opportunities in intermodal that 3PLs consistently miss, the East Coast Repositioning Program may be the most significant. It offers deeply discounted rates on a specific set of lanes — and because most 3PLs aren't aware of it, offering it to your customers is an immediate competitive differentiator.

What the Program Is

Railroads periodically need to reposition 40' and 45' containers from East Coast rail ramps to their West Coast hubs, where demand for outbound international shipping is highest. To fill that equipment on the westbound trip, they offer deeply discounted rates to shippers and IMCs whose freight is moving in that direction. The railroad gets their containers back to the West Coast. Your customers get rates they won't find anywhere else. You capture attractive margin on a lane where most competitors aren't even playing.

PROGRAM SPECIFICS

Container types: 40' and 45' only (not 53')

Origins: East Coast rail ramps — FL, GA, NC, SC, VA, MD, NY, NJ, PA and surrounding states

Destinations: Five West Coast ramps only

Savings: Regularly 30%+ versus comparable OTR rates

Los Angeles California	**Oakland** California	**Portland** Oregon	**Seattle** Washington	**Vancouver BC** Canada

The 3PL Opportunity

Most of your competitors offering intermodal aren't aware this program exists — or they can't access it because they don't hold direct railroad contracts. LaserNet Jax participates directly. When you partner with us, you can offer this program to any of your customers shipping East-to-West, giving you a rate advantage that cannot be matched by a broker.

How to Find Candidates in Your Book

- ✓ Any customer with East Coast origins shipping to California, Oregon, Washington, or Vancouver BC
- ✓ Retailers, distributors, or manufacturers replenishing West Coast inventory from East Coast production
- ✓ Agricultural or food producers in the Southeast shipping to West Coast markets
- ✓ Any customer currently complaining about West Coast shipping costs who uses 40' or 45' equipment

> **A CONVERSATION STARTER THAT WORKS**
>
> "We have access to a railroad repositioning program on East Coast to West Coast lanes that most of the market doesn't know about. If you're moving freight from [origin state] to [LA/Oakland/Portland/Seattle/Vancouver], I'd like to run your lanes and show you what the rate looks like. The savings versus what you're paying now could be significant."

8

CHAPTER EIGHT

Growing Your Intermodal Book of Business

A practical framework for building a scalable, profitable intermodal program.

A 3PL's intermodal program doesn't happen all at once. The most successful programs are built one customer at a time, validated on a single lane, and then expanded methodically as the model proves itself. Here's the framework that works.

Phase 1: The First Win (Month 1–2)

Start with your best candidate — a customer you know well, a long lane, consistent volume, and a relationship where you have the credibility to introduce something new. Run their lane through LaserNet Jax, get a real quote, and present it as a pilot. The goal is one successful conversion that you can point to internally and externally.

- ✓ Identify the single best candidate in your current book
- ✓ Submit the lane to LaserNet Jax for a quote — we'll turn it around the same day
- ✓ Present the rate to your customer with a clear explanation of what changes (transit time) and what improves (cost, capacity stability)
- ✓ Run the pilot lane alongside OTR for 30 days to build comparison data

Phase 2: Systematize the Scan (Month 3–4)

Once you have a successful pilot, systematize the process of identifying candidates across your entire book. This doesn't need to be complex.

- ✓ Run a quarterly lane audit — pull all loads over 750 miles, filter for dry van, sort by volume
- ✓ Submit your top 10 candidate lanes to LaserNet Jax for batch quoting
- ✓ Build a simple internal reference showing which lanes are intermodal-eligible and at what savings
- ✓ Brief your account managers on how to identify and flag intermodal candidates during customer conversations

Phase 3: Make It Part of Every Proposal (Month 5+)

The most successful 3PL intermodal programs don't sell intermodal as a separate product — they embed it into every freight management proposal for qualifying lanes. When you're bidding on a new customer's freight, include an intermodal option for every lane over 750 miles. It demonstrates sophistication, provides the customer with a genuine cost reduction option, and positions you as a strategic partner rather than a rate-matching vendor.

> **THE COMPOUNDING EFFECT**
>
> A 3PL that converts just 5 customers to intermodal at an average of 20 loads per month each is moving 100 intermodal loads per month. At an average margin of $250 per load, that's **$25,000 per month — $300,000 per year — in incremental gross margin** from lanes that likely existed in your book already. Intermodal doesn't require new customers. It requires a better partner.

Measuring Success

- ✓ **Intermodal loads as % of total load count:** A healthy 3PL intermodal program runs 15–25% of eligible lanes on intermodal
- ✓ **Margin per intermodal load vs. OTR load:** Direct IMC partnerships should yield 40–60% higher margin per load than broker-sourced intermodal
- ✓ **Customer retention on converted lanes:** Customers saving money with you on intermodal are significantly less likely to bid the business elsewhere
- ✓ **Quote-to-conversion rate:** Track how often intermodal quotes convert to bookings — a low rate usually signals rate or transit time issues worth addressing

> *"We converted 40 loads a month from OTR to intermodal and the savings paid for a new hire. LaserNet Jax handled every detail — our customers didn't even know anything changed."*
>
> D. MARTINEZ · LOGISTICS DIRECTOR · MIDWEST MANUFACTURER

The 3PLs winning in intermodal today aren't the ones with the most customers or the biggest technology platforms. They're the ones with the best IMC partner — a direct railroad relationship, reliable capacity, and a single point of contact who actually picks up the phone. That's the partnership LaserNet Jax is built to be.

Intermodal Freight Simplified.
Service Amplified.

Let's build your intermodal program together.
One call. One contact. Real railroad rates. Always.

Ready to become a LaserNet Jax partner?

Tell us about your customer base — we'll identify the opportunities and get you quoting within the same day.

Call **(904) 551-7544**

○ Email **john@lsrnetjax.com**

Web **lsrnetjax.com**

DIRECT IMC — RAILROAD CONTRACTS ACROSS NORTH AMERICA

· CSX · NORFOLK SOUTHERN · UNION PACIFICCIFIC · CN · CP · IN INTERMODAL SINCE 2008

· US & CANADA COVERAGE