

How to Run a Freight Audit & Pay RFP That Actually Delivers Savings



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Transportation spend is becoming increasingly complex for modern shippers as they contend with rising parcel volumes and multi-carrier networks. Meanwhile, heightened financial scrutiny from supply chain leaders and the C-suite leaves transportation and procurement teams under pressure to find partners who can quickly demonstrate a good return on investment.

Yet, many of the processes these teams use to evaluate freight audit and payment providers do not reflect the realities of the modern marketplace. Transportation and procurement professionals frequently turn to outdated request for proposal (RFP) templates that prioritize outdated capabilities or feature generic compliance checklists instead of aiming to solicit responses from providers that can actually address modern transportation problems with modern technology solutions.

As a result, procurement and transportation professionals often send RFPs into the world that are unintentionally fielded exclusively by managed service providers or consultants rather than technology providers that can help shippers manage transportation data in real time. While questions about transportation modes or compliance are important, they do not provide any information about how a potential partner will help the shipper optimize transportation spend over time.

For shippers looking to modernize their transportation spend across modes, finding the right solution begins with rethinking how freight audit and pay RFPs are structured.

Why Traditional Freight Audit & Pay RFPs Fall Short

Freight audit and pay RFPs have long followed the same pattern, consisting of long lists of functional questions intended to verify whether vendors support specific carriers, transportation modes, or financial processes. On paper, these questionnaires may appear comprehensive — but in practice, they often obscure the differences between providers.

“Effectively, there are probably a dozen freight audit and payment providers that can check whatever boxes need to be checked,” says Michael Falls, chief customer officer at Reveel, a provider of shipping intelligence solutions. “Are any of them doing all of those things with excellence? Probably not.”

Part of the issue with many freight audit and payment RFPs is a heavy focus on operational processes that were differentiators a decade or more ago but are now simply table stakes for most providers. Since sourcing teams do not always have



deep logistics expertise, they draft RFPs with overly broad questionnaires to cover every requirement.

“They’re afraid of not asking the right questions, so they ask too many questions,” says Stephen Seidl, principle sales engineer at Reveel.

This structure creates multiple challenges for shippers, including:

- Vendor responses become difficult to differentiate.
- Generalized declarations about technology capabilities.
- Minimal insight into the availability of analytics and optimization tools.

Selecting providers based only on generic criteria can result in the shipper going all-in on a partnership that can never fully deliver what it needs.

“Switching costs are very high in the freight audit and payment world. You may only be signing a three-year contract, but there is typically a lengthy implementation, especially for complex shippers, where the provider has to integrate with all of the different carriers. Then you set up all your reporting with them, and you integrate your payment processes. Those are the things that are really hard to unplug and decouple once you’re integrated. Once someone implements with their provider, they’re with them for the long haul.”

MICHAEL FALLS
Chief Customer Officer at Reveel

Managed Services vs. Technology Platforms

Another reason traditional RFPs often fall short is their inability to distinguish between two fundamentally different approaches to freight audit and pay: managed services providers and technology platforms.

Historically, most providers in this space have operated under a managed services model. These organizations combine proprietary or out-of-the-box third-party software with teams of analysts who handle all auditing, reporting, and carrier interactions on behalf of the shipper.

“Most freight audit and payment companies would self-identify as technology-enabled managed service, with the idea being that there is some intellectual property from a software perspective that they have,” says Falls. “I can empathize. I’ve been in organizations like that. It isn’t really scalable because the only way to scale managed services audit is to scale



their human capital and keep hiring. A lot of them are using legacy tools like Excel or SQL Server, and it's hard to transition without completely rewriting your software.”

Older or more manual systems are simply not built to keep up with the needs of high-volume shipping, especially in the retail space, where hundreds of thousands or millions of parcels may move every week.

“Some of the legacy tools literally do not scale. Excel has a limit of just over a million rows. If you're shipping more packages than that, you simply can't use a system like that. Even when you can, some of these legacy tools take a long time to run, they are slow and clunky.”

STEPHEN SEIDEL
Principle Sales Engineer at Reveel



Technology-led platforms, on the other hand, operate differently. Rather than requiring analysts to conduct investigations behind the scenes, modern freight audit and payment platforms place transportation data and analytics directly in front of the shipper. This approach removes the intermediary and introduces speed, transparency and accuracy into the equation.

This distinction has important implications for how shippers interact with their transportation data. In a managed services model, organizations must wait for periodic reports or quarterly business reviews to identify opportunities for improvement. By contrast, the real-time data flow from a technology platform enables transportation teams to access insights, facilitating active and ongoing continuous improvement.

The difference ultimately comes down to visibility and control. Either transportation intelligence remains gated behind a vendor's fence, or it becomes a shared resource that internal teams can use to make faster decisions based on what is happening today rather than what happened last quarter.



The Critical Role of Parcel in Transportation Spend Management

While the majority of freight audit and pay solutions support multiple transportation modes, parcel shipping has understandably become an important focus for many shippers. The rapid growth of e-commerce and direct-to-consumer fulfillment has dramatically increased parcel volumes across industries. Even companies with high-volume, multi-modal freight networks will often find that parcel represents a growing share of shipment activity.

At the same time, parcel networks introduce unique operational dynamics not necessarily found in other modes. For example, parcel shipping typically involves high shipment volumes, complex pricing structures and a much wider range

of accessorial charges. These factors generate large volumes of data that, when analyzed effectively, reveal cost-saving opportunities.

As such, many businesses choose to prioritize parcel visibility when evaluating transportation analytics platforms, even when their networks include multiple transportation modes. In these environments, parcel insights can serve as the foundation for broader transportation optimization strategies. Transportation leaders who gain visibility into parcel pricing trends, service usage and carrier performance can often apply similar analytical approaches to other transportation modes across their networks.

The Modern Capabilities Your RFP Is Missing

Since traditional RFP structures may inadvertently attract only proposals from managed service providers, transportation and procurement teams must update freight and payment RFPs to assess more relevant competencies. To stay competitive in evolving and volatile markets, shippers must source providers that can offer the following capabilities.

Shipment-level transparency

Transparency into shipment-level data and analytics is table stakes for leading supply chains, so organizations that want to remain competitive need to gain the ability to view shipments in real time and make decisions based on up-to-the-minute information.

Yet, in traditional consulting and managed services models, analysts typically still withhold that data within proprietary tools and spreadsheets. This structure not only limits visibility into the data itself, but also into how it is generated.

“If you’re a consultant and your toolkit is Excel, then your customer doesn’t have transparency into what is happening

within your tool,” Falls says. “You’ve probably built macros and have analysts crunching the numbers behind the scenes. Maybe you’re using some combination of AI tools to get answers more quickly. But it’s all just kind of a black box to the shipper.”

In comparison, modern technology platforms expose those analytics directly within user-facing dashboards, allowing transportation teams to explore their own data as they wish. Transportation leaders can not only more easily audit and validate spend — they can explain it to cross-functional stakeholders and leaders, ultimately driving better internal alignment.



Modeling and simulation

The ability to run what-if simulations of scenarios based on transportation data has become an emerging differentiator for businesses. Shippers can test different carrier pricing scenarios, service changes, or network adjustments using their own current shipment data.

Historically, these analyses required consultants to build complex spreadsheets and could take weeks or more to complete. Modern Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) technology platforms produce these simulations in mere minutes. This speed is essential in today's volatile freight environment, where delayed shipments can shut down production lines or damage customer relationships.

Business model alignment

Pricing models may also play an important role in aligning incentives between shippers and providers. Consulting and managed service models often base rates on the number of invoices processed, which can drive costs up over time as the business grows.

“The trap with that is that your freight costs always continue to rise,” says Seidl. “It snowballs. Shippers get to the end of a three-year deal, and they don't want to pay anymore because it's gone up every year.”

SaaS technology platforms, by contrast, generally operate on subscription pricing models, which give shippers access to analytics tools and optimization capabilities without tying fees directly to specific processing volumes. This structure can help shippers create greater predictability and transparency about costs over the long term.

What to Actually Test With Your Freight Audit & Payment RFP

The overall goal of your freight audit and payment RFP should not be to confirm basic operational capabilities, but to evaluate the provider's ability to deliver actionable transportation intelligence for your organization. To this end, a modern RFP should test for capabilities such as:

“It all kind of comes down to surviving versus thriving. This information is not hard. You can address these things, and it's going to free you up to look at things a little more broadly.”

STEPHEN SEIDEL
Principle Sales Engineer at Reveel

- **Advanced shipment analytics.** Providers should offer shippers access to comprehensive dashboards and reporting tools to monitor performance and costs across carriers and services.
- **Scenario modeling and optimization.** Shippers need to run what-if analyses with their own shipment data to evaluate carrier proposals or network changes.
- **Proof-of-concept evaluations.** Written proposals are a good starting point, but organizations are increasingly asking vendors to provide sample shipment data during the RFP process to demonstrate platform capabilities.
- **Financial system integrations.** Freight audit and payment processes directly impact financial reporting, so platforms should integrate seamlessly with a shipper's accounting and enterprise systems.
- **Continuous optimization tools.** Shippers need real-time insights as new shipment data enters the system to identify issues early and respond more quickly to pricing changes and service patterns.

Effective Freight Audit & Payment Begins at the RFP



Modern, intelligence-driven freight audit and payment solutions play a critical role in transportation spend management — but those solutions are only effective if providers are properly evaluated.

RFPs that focus primarily on generic operational checklists or legacy processes will inadvertently limit the range of proposals the shippers receive for consideration. RFPs designed to test analytics, transparency, modeling and other critical capabilities for today's transportation environment will garner responses from transportation intelligence platforms that cater to the needs of modern multi-modal shippers.

As transportation networks and markets continue to evolve, the most successful shippers will be those who treat freight audit and payment as an ongoing source of strategic insight rather than a static operational function.

Are you ready to take your freight audit and payment RFP to the next level?

Explore optimized frameworks and best practices with Reveel's free [Spend Management RFP Template](#), which will guide you in structuring your evaluations to identify modern transportation intelligence capabilities.



About Reveel

Reveel is the leading Shipping Intelligence™ Platform that enables companies to level the playing field with their carriers across all modes of transportation. With over two decades of parcel spend management expertise and over \$8 billion in spend under management, the company provides real-time actionable insights to empower customers to make smarter business decisions and have peace of mind. With the Reveel Shipping Intelligence Platform, backed by guidance from industry experts, shippers leverage the power of unified shipping data across all modes of transportation, analyzed with AI, machine learning, and data science to capture significant ROI and improve their competitive advantage. For more information, please visit the company's [website](#) and follow it on [X](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

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