

50 QUESTIONS A RAIL FLEET MANAGER SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER

1. Where are all of your rail cars located?
2. How many railroads, and which ones, are moving your rail cars?
3. How many, and specifically what are, the rail routes that you use to ship to your customers?
4. Are these rail routes the most optimal routes to send the cars to your customers?
5. How many rail shipments do your facilities make per day/week/month/year?
6. How many rail cars, of each possible type, are required to meet your shipment demand?
7. How much of a buffer do you plan for when you decide how many rail cars you need?
8. Do you know how to create bills of lading for any situation and on any railroad, if a situation requires it?
9. What is the average transit time and standard deviation for each of your O-D Pairs?
10. What is your average dwell time in transit, and where does this dwell time typically occur?
11. Do you or your customers manage the freight contracts with your rail carriers, and why?
12. How often are your cars “bad ordered”, and what do you do when it happens?
13. Do you understand the loading, unloading, and cleaning processes for all of your cars?
14. Do you know the estimated time of arrival (ETA) for all of your current shipments?
15. Are you comparing your delivery date to your ETA on a daily or regular basis?
16. Are you communicating deviations in delivery date versus ETA to your customers?
17. How many loaded cars on site & in transit are required to maintain required inventory at each customer?
18. Do the loading facilities know what empty cars are available to them on a daily basis?
19. What is your utilization percentage for each car fleet you have?
20. What would you do if a railroad “loses” one of your rail cars?
21. What is the average hold time and standard deviation for each customer?
22. How many annual turns do each of your fleets and your overall fleet make?
23. Do you full-service lease, net lease, purchase/own, or use railroad-owned equipment, and why?
24. When is the maintenance of each of your rail cars due?
25. When are all of your cars requiring either replacement, lease renewal, or other possible change-out?
26. How can you get additional cars, or get rid of an excess number of cars, if you need to?
27. How much are you spending on rail car management (leasing, ownership, etc) on an annual basis?
28. Are you finding ways to reduce your fleet costs every year?
29. What do you do if one of your cars is damaged in transit, either loaded or empty?
30. How much are you spending on rail car maintenance per year?
31. How much time do your cars spend at the shop (lost time) per year?
32. What percentage of your product currently goes by rail, and are there opportunities for more?
33. For each of your customers, how does the cost of shipping by rail compare to shipping by other means?
34. Do you have a network of shops that you can use to get the maintenance your cars require?
35. Have you established a network of mobile repair options in case you cannot get a car to a shop?
36. Do you have a rail car inspection plan & procedure for each time a car arrives on your property?
37. Are you knowledgeable of the “operating” parts of your rail cars, especially those that require repair?
38. Do you have working relationships with rail car part suppliers and keep up with latest options?
39. How much do you spend on emergency truck shipments per year to make up for late rail car deliveries?
40. Do you ever have situations where you do not have cars available to make a shipment, and why?
41. Are you aware of the current rail equipment regulations or mandatory programs?
42. How do you file a claim with the railroad?
43. Do you have demurrage or rail car storage costs, and if so, what are you doing to reduce those costs?
44. Do you know your railroads’ representatives at least by name and are you able to easily contact them?
45. Do you know the seasonal effects upon your supply chain and do you have a plan to smooth it out?
46. How accurate are your rail sales forecasts, and how do they affect your planning models?
47. What are your customers’ main issues, if any, when it comes to handling your rail cars?
48. How do you keep up with current trends and changes in the rail industry?
49. Are you and your department accountable for driving down logistics costs?
50. Could you use some help managing your rail car fleet?

