



C3 Solutions



Dock Scheduling  
and the  
Grocery Industry

Opportunities for your Supply Chain



# About the Authors

## Gregory Braun

Senior Vice-President, Sales & Marketing  
C3 Solutions

Gregory Braun is co-founder of C3 Solutions and is responsible for the marketing and sales department. Greg has over 22 years of experience in the transportation industry of which the last 13 have been focused on yard and dock management.

This expertise has been a valuable asset to open new markets for C3's products over the years. Greg is not only working at increasing the customer base but also upholds good business relationships with existing customers who are the key to C3's success.

## François (Frank) Dorval

Account Manager  
C3 Solutions

François focuses on promoting C3 Reservations internationally and developing a strong business relationship with our customers.

With his entire career being in customer service and business development, including 18 years spent in distribution and manufacturing environments, François brings to C3 Solutions valuable insight into these segments.



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# Dock Scheduling and the Grocery Industry

Grocers, wholesalers or retailers, national or regional players, all face similar challenges:



Is the food getting to the stores fresh?



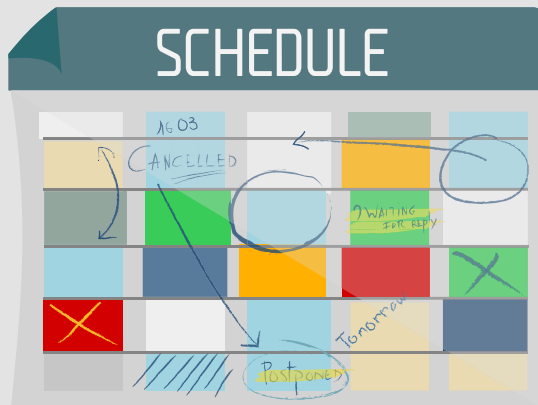
Are vendors bringing the right product on time?



Are dock receiving resources used efficiently?

How do grocers avoid bottlenecks, track freshness dates, prioritize shipments and automate the scheduling process?

There are many factors that influence the answers to the above questions, including the process by which you request, book and confirm appointments. Many companies are still managing their appointment process by phone or email, entering data in shared spreadsheets and paper logs or even using colorful whiteboards!





# Solutions for the Grocery Industry

In this E-book, you'll find brief solutions to real problems as well as full-length case studies.

Find out how an automated dock scheduling system solves the scheduling madness in the grocery and food wholesale industry.

- ★ Balancing the Workload
- ★ Saving Time
- ★ Using the Best Tool for the Job at Hand
- ★ Fitting Dock Scheduling into your Solution Mix
- ★ Great Benefits for Buyers and Analysis

## ★ Solutions for the Grocery Industry

# BALANCING THE WORKLOAD

The need to balance the broad variety of load types, load modes and products

## THE CHALLENGE

The high turnover and freshness of the produce emphasizes the need for grocers to receive the right loads at the right time, all the while maintaining a balanced workload on their docks.

The challenge is rendered even more complex by the wide variety of products (produce, grocery, pharmacy, etc.), load types (palletized, slip sheets, double stack, etc.) and load category (prepaid, collect, backhauls).

A basic calendar or generic scheduling system doesn't provide enough parameters to set rules which will respect the business' priorities.



## THE SOLUTION

A dock scheduling system should provide a planning and execution tool which ensures the right product will arrive on time while balancing the dock workload.

This is achieved by using sophisticated constraints, unload duration computation rules and PO information (EDD, SKU, Qty) in order to enforce the most efficient scheduling of each appointment request.

## ★ Solutions for the Grocery Industry

# SAVING TIME

The necessity to streamline the scheduling process and eliminate duplicate data entry between systems

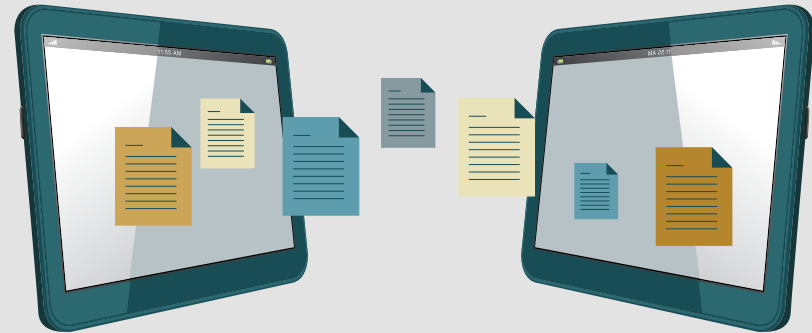
## THE CHALLENGE

It is common for large grocery chains to have a centralized appointment desk, managing the inbound schedules for all their facilities.

The main challenge is to:

- ★ Modernize and streamline the appointment desk
- ★ Reduce phone calls and emails

In addition, schedulers are often burdened by having to enter duplicate data into multiple systems.



## THE SOLUTION

A web-based scheduling system allows operations to maintain a centralized appointment desk, with a fraction of the labor previously required. Web portals provide real-time communication between external parties (carriers, suppliers, customers) and internal parties (schedulers, buyers, CSRs).

Now carriers enter the appointment information directly into the system based on actual PO information that was received from the source business system. In addition to the increased productivity, management has real-time visibility on all schedules.

## USING THE BEST TOOL FOR THE JOB AT HAND

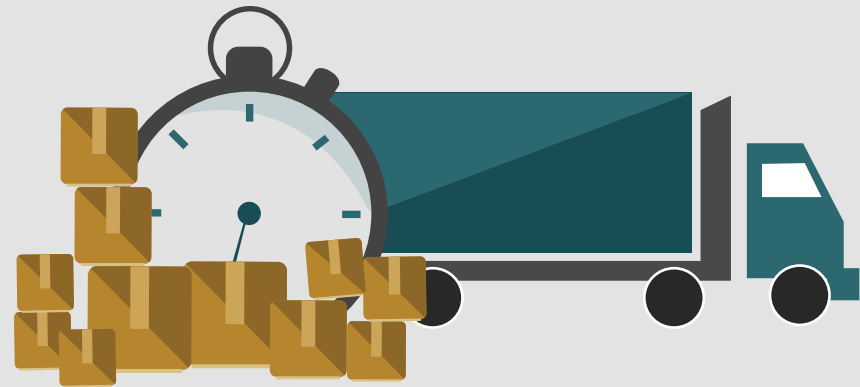
The inadequacy of the TMS as a scheduling tool for managing prepaid freight

### THE CHALLENGE

A TMS system is an excellent tool to manage load tendering, route optimization and the freight settlement process.

However this does not mean it is the best tool to manage your dock appointments. A TMS system is not designed to understand all of the capacity constraints and throughput issues involved with managing a dock.

Furthermore vendor managed freight does not fall under the scope of the TMS.



### THE SOLUTION

A best-in-class scheduling system focuses on planning and scheduling; it can handle collect, prepaid or any other type of load that may be expected. The scheduling information can easily be shared in real-time with a TMS, thus enhancing the end-to-end receiving process and providing operations with the best of both worlds.



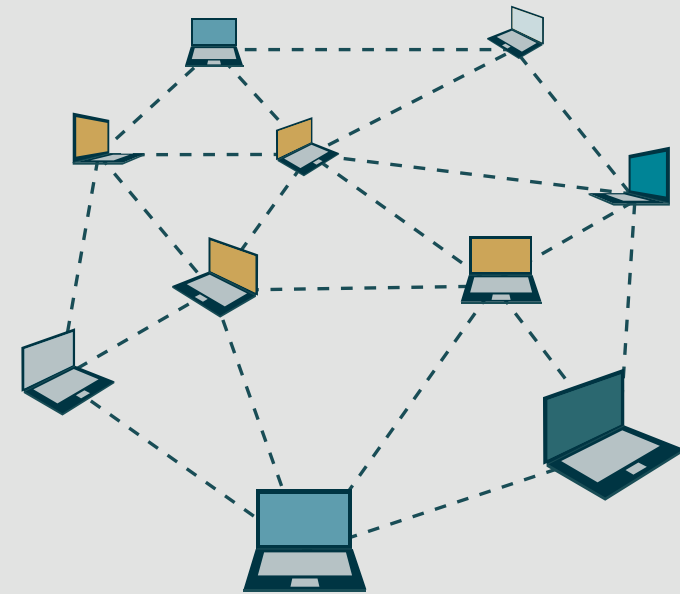
## FITTING DOCK SCHEDULING INTO YOUR SOLUTION MIX

Implementing a dock scheduling system should be simple

### THE CHALLENGE

Most grocers' ERP or WMS systems do not provide an adequate dock scheduling tool. Confronted with this, operations end up relying on creative in-house, stand-alone initiatives (i.e. spreadsheets).

Furthermore, implementing a SaaS dock scheduling application doesn't mean that you have to change your legacy ERP/WMS systems.



### THE SOLUTION

A SaaS dock-scheduling tool can be simple to implement and to integrate into systems and processes already in place. With standardized integration methods, such as web services, P.O. data and appointment information can be shared in real time, providing a complete solution!

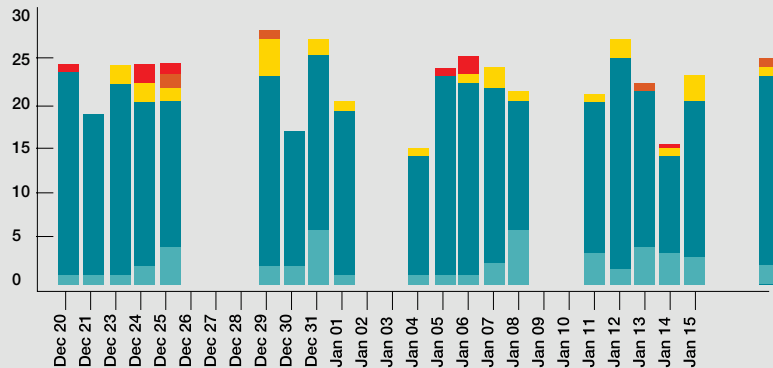
## ★ Solutions for the Grocery Industry

# BRINGING BENEFITS TO BUYERS

Purchasing departments require real-time visibility on receiving activities

## THE CHALLENGE

Buyers want to know when orders are booked into the warehouse and also need to track their progress and any compliance issues that might arise. Obtaining this information can represent a tedious series of emails, phone calls and spreadsheets.



## THE SOLUTION

An automated dock scheduling system helps the buyers by providing them visibility on:

- ✓ purchase orders appointment times
- ✓ unbooked orders
- ✓ hot product / back order deliveries
- ✓ non-compliant vendors
- ✓ precise load pallet and case counts

They can obtain the above via a read only access to the dock scheduling portal or, if data integration is in place, appointment times and key data can be sent to their host system.



# Case Studies from our Grocery Customers

The complexity of the grocery supply chain provides opportunities for great improvement.

- ★ C3 Reservations, A Solution Rich in Functionality For a Food Distributor
- ★ Automating the Centralized Appointment
- ★ Pairing Best Technologies with Best Practices
- ★ Synchronizing Dock Operations with Purchasing

## ★ Case studies from our Grocery Customers

# C3 RESERVATIONS, A SOLUTION RICH IN FUNCTIONALITY FOR A FOOD DISTRIBUTOR

One of C3 Reservations' early adopters is a leading North American distributor of natural and speciality food products, which distributes over 60,000 products to more than 33,000 retail outlets. In a very competitive industry, this company needed a functionality rich dock scheduling system that would be easy to deploy at a competitive price.

### THE CHALLENGE

Our customer wanted to improve their overall warehouse operations. They were running a decentralized model with appointment takers at each DC. They had many key warehouse resources on the phone, responding to emails and faxes to setup appointments that carriers weren't respecting.

They wanted to improve the productivity of its team, centralize the appointment taking process and make the carriers more accountable.

### THE RESULTS

The organization first piloted C3 Reservations at one of their busiest warehouses as a proof of concept, after which they rolled out eight additional sites over a period of 4 weeks; realizing significant savings right away:

- ✓ Up to 90 % reduction of phone calls
- ✓ Up to 80 % reduction in over-time dock labor charges
- ✓ Up to 50 % increase in schedulers' productivity
- ✓ Up to 50% reduction in carrier compliance issues

“We have increased the productivity of our schedulers by 50 percent and our receiving at the warehouses has been streamlined and simplified. We now have a standardized appointment scheduling process that is uniform across the business.

- Vice-President, Distribution Operations

## ★ Case studies from our Grocery Customers

# AUTOMATING THE CENTRALIZED APPOINTMENT DESK

Among the top 10 North American food retailers, this retail giant's logistics operation includes 20 distribution centers which receive **50,000 appointments per month**. These appointments were managed by a team of schedulers that received emails and updated dedicated spreadsheets for each warehouse; clearly a tedious process that was a bottleneck to their expected growth.

## THE CHALLENGE

Schedulers were burdened with many different challenges, which included:

- ★ Sorting and filing overwhelmingly large quantities of email appointment requests from carriers and suppliers.
- ★ Waiting for updated PO feeds to validate quantities and due times.
- ★ Struggling to successfully fit backhauls into the DC schedules.
- ★ Juggling DC capacity and unique operational constraints (compiled in huge instruction binders).
- ★ Being the single point of contact for all receiving inquiries between carriers, suppliers, buyers and DC operations.

The combination of these points made inbound planning/receiving very labor intensive, inefficient and a bottleneck for future growth.

*Improving processes for the container arrivals at port and backhaul management were also made possible. In the case of managing inbound marine containers, the ASN information is now loaded into C3 Reservations with expected pick-up dates being scheduled and visible on the carrier portal. Carriers confirm online the delivery appointments at the respective DCs and then proceed with picking up the containers at port en route to the DCs. This new process eliminates a lengthy trail of emails, provides visibility in real-time and the stored data is available for reporting and analysis.*

## THE RESULTS

- ✓ C3 Reservations reduced labor affected to scheduling by more than 60% in the first year.
- ✓ Suppliers use the self-serve portal to request appointments and buyers have access to PO status.
- ✓ Appointment information and total pallet counts are available in real-time (vs. waiting for a report once or twice daily).
- ✓ Integrating purchase order information into C3 Reservations meant that there was no need for copy/pasting and duplicate data entry. Pallet counts, the principal measure of volume, were automatically measured hourly, by shift, by commodity per DC (great for labor planning).
- ✓ Visibility in real-time was now accessible to all the DCs via their own online portal.
- ✓ As for backhaul management, POs are flagged automatically through data integration (from the grocer's ERP) and are managed by each site; eliminating another set of unique spreadsheets and hoards of emails.

## ★ Case studies from our Grocery Customers

# PAIRING BEST TECHNOLOGIES WITH BEST PRACTICES

This European grocer, with 840 stores in its main market, came to C3 Solutions with the desire to modernize the outdated technology and user interface they were using for scheduling appointments to their facilities. In an impressively short two month period, the implementation team successfully revamped the system and processes in place; from the online carrier/supplier portal to the application tools used in the gate/receiving offices to manage staging areas and door assignments, complete with purchase order integration.

## THE CHALLENGE

Scheduling practices are particularly complicated in the grocery world due to the numerous exceptions and rules which govern a scheduler's decision for booking load dates and times.

Despite having a scheduling application already in place, this grocer still required much manual effort to reorganize and adjust their schedules, day after day. This was due to the fact that their system was merely automating the communication aspect of the process, without optimizing their scheduling - which was more or less done in a "first request, first booked" basis.

With their growing business and warehouse automation projects, this was no longer viable.

## THE RESULTS

The planning capabilities of C3 Reservations truly shone due to its uniquely powerful rule engine, allowing for planning extensive rules, constraints, and priorities – eliminating much of the manual intervention required in the scheduling process. Due to the complexity associated with having a highly automated warehouse (palletizer, automatic inspection and placement of product), many parameters needed to be considered in building schedules:

- ✓ precise unloading times
- ✓ load prioritization
- ✓ door allocations
- ✓ self-replenishment agreements with vendors
- ✓ fresh and fast moving items
- ✓ expected delivery dates validation
- ✓ automated standing appointment times expiration

This implementation is a success story as it combined C3 Reservations with industry best practices, providing its business and supply chain partners a truly automated "lights-out" distribution center.

## ★ Case studies from our Grocery Customers

# SYNCHRONIZING DOCK OPERATIONS WITH PURCHASING

This UK grocer manages 12 distribution centers serving over 2,800 stores. After a rigorous RFP process, C3 Reservations was selected based on its broad range of features, integration capabilities with the WMS and its extensive reporting features.

## THE CHALLENGE

This grocer managed its 10,000 appointment requests per month spread over 12 DCs, from a centralized bookings desk with a combination of paper forms and data entry into its WMS system. The challenges were numerous but the main concerns can be summarized as:

- ★ Managing a call centre that received hundreds of calls per day from suppliers requesting appointments.
- ★ Maintaining a manual (paper binder) schedule for each warehouse. Several appointment clerks shared each binder.
- ★ Time consuming data entry of each appointment into the WMS system.
- ★ Inability to predict unload times and overall appointment capacity.
- ★ Buyers were not able to get updates on PO delivery status and subsequently purchased more products than required.

## THE RESULTS

- ✓ **Via integration**, C3 Reservations receives PO information from the WMS in order to speed up the completion of the appointment request. Likewise, once confirmed, the appointment times are then sent back to the WMS, liberating the staff from having to enter the data manually.
- ✓ **Suppliers and carriers request appointments online.** The portal being available 24/7, these supply chain partners no longer need to call into the appointment desk, their appointments are confirmed automatically, and all communications are automated between the portals or via system generated email confirmations.
- ✓ **DC screens are updated in real-time** as changes arise and receivers are able to track arrival times (and no shows), add comments and compliance information right in the appointment screen.

This is another great example of how C3 Reservations positively affects areas of the grocery business that go beyond the initial project objectives, including enhanced relationships with the supply chain partners due to a faster and more precise process.



# Why do Grocers and Food Wholesalers Choose C3 Reservations?

C3 Reservations is the only dock scheduling system which performs to the standards and challenges of the grocery supply chain.

Contact us for a live demonstration and find out why grocers and food wholesalers have entrusted their dock scheduling operations to C3 Reservations; in the United States, Canada, and Europe.



**REQUEST A LIVE DEMO**

[www.c3solutions.com](http://www.c3solutions.com)





# About C3 Solutions

C3 Solutions is a leading provider of software solutions dedicated to the area of **yard management** and **dock scheduling**.

C3's customers are fortune 1000 companies in the retail, manufacturing, transportation and post and parcel industries. C3's products include its award winning yard management software, Yard Smart and its on-demand dock scheduling system - C3 Reservations.

Founded in 2000 and based in Montreal QC, C3 Solutions has customers in the United States, Canada and Europe.

For more information on C3's products, schedule a free on-line demonstration:



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