



Beating communication bottlenecks in the supply chain crisis

A guide for freight companies: how to increase operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and employee happiness in the logistics industry

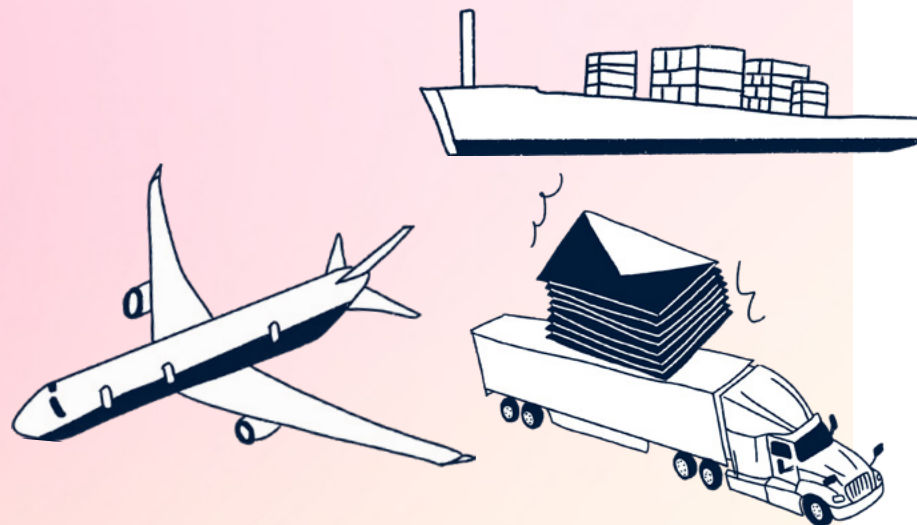


Table of Contents

3	The current supply chain crisis
5	The challenges with existing freight communication workflows
7	Traditional communication workflow negatively impacts efficiency, customer experience, and employee happiness
10	Creating a better communication workflow
21	Best-in-class freight teams run on Front
23	Appendix

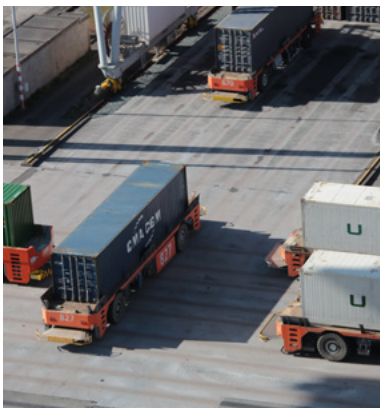
The current supply chain crisis

The supply chain has been massively disrupted in recent years. Unprecedented schedule delays, congested ports, and reduced container capacity will continue to impact the freight industry into 2022 and beyond. Supply chain executives identified 3 key challenges the industry is universally facing: a labor shortage, a lack of equipment availability, and global bottlenecks¹. Let's look at each of them:



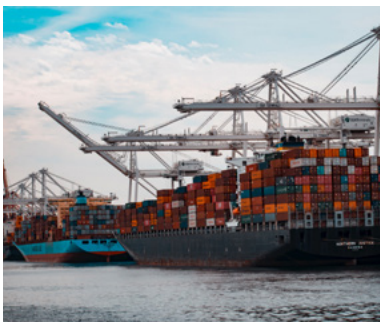
Labor shortage

The freight industry has struggled to engage the younger generation. As an aging workforce retires, young people are not joining the industry at the same rate, creating widespread shortages of available workers. Despite the strong demand for logistics labor, companies can't find and retain talent due to changes in priorities for working people, the COVID-19 pandemic, and competition among other industries.



Equipment availability

The lack of available equipment has also contributed to the supply chain disruption. Companies can only execute with the equipment they already have available. On top of this, the emerging need to decarbonize fleets and implement new climate-friendly operating processes requires adopting new equipment — equipment that just isn't available at the speed it needs to be thanks to deeply interconnected challenges in the manufacturing industry.



Global bottlenecks

Global bottlenecks have had a ripple effect through the entire supply chain, most famously at ports on the west coast of the United States. The spikes in volume have created a logjam in the shipping process, making shipper and carrier communication more important than ever before.

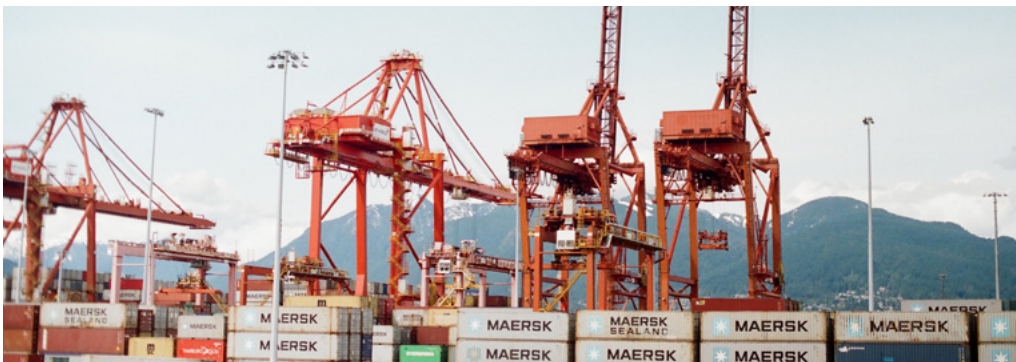
The global supply chain crisis has made it harder for the freight industry to deliver great customer service. Shortages and supply chain disruptions combine to create overall more communication, with [80% of 3PLs seeing increases in 2021](#). The increase in volume and complexity of these requests puts a strain on customer sales, carrier sales, operations, and finance teams alike.

Communication has always been a challenge in the transportation and logistics industry. High email volume, unclear task ownership, lack of access to information, and bumpy handoffs reduce operational efficiency and hurt the customer experience. These challenges have been amplified by global supply chain issues with [89% of freight industry respondents](#) agreeing that the overall customer experience has been negatively impacted.

How can freight brokerages reduce email volume, increase operational efficiency, and improve their shipper and carrier relationships during these turbulent times?

This ebook will cover how traditional freight industry communication workflows are impacted by the supply chain crisis. It will share solutions on how to optimize communication, improve operational efficiency, customer experience, and employee happiness.

We share examples from MNX Global Logistics, OVRSEA, and Estes Forwarding Worldwide on how they beat communication challenges to respond faster and work more efficiently.



The challenges with existing freight communication workflows

With multiple stakeholders and hundreds of messages, successful communication is not an easy task without the right process and workflow in place. There are more than a few challenges that teams face. See the chart below for examples.



Common configurations

- Hundreds of email distribution lists
- Using a shared inbox
- CC and email forwarding for visibility
- Internal collaboration in Teams or Slack
- Multiple team members receive the same email
- After-hours team receives irrelevant emails from daytime shift
- Manually track key performance metrics (if tracked at all)



End Result

- Important emails missed due to overload
- Unclear ownership, lack of personalization
- Inefficient internal collaboration, long email threads
- Information flows slowly due to fragmented systems
- Lack of accountability, unclear ownership
- Wastes time and potentially misses something important
- Difficulty understanding current performance & how to improve

Top communication challenges for logistics companies

Traditional freight industry communication workflows present 4 core challenges [which are exacerbated by the supply chain crisis](#): communication overload, ineffective internal collaboration, process inefficiencies, and manual results tracking.



Communication overload

Supply chain issues increase email frequency and number of touchpoints



Ineffective internal collaboration

Clunky email threads and information spread across tools make collaborating difficult



Process inefficiencies

Communication workflows create duplicate work and make handoffs difficult



Manual results tracking

Lack of key performance metrics hinders the ability to improve customer experience

3PLs must provide quick responses and frequent status updates in order to maintain a superior customer experience. We cover how to beat these communication challenges in a later section.

Traditional communication workflow negatively impacts efficiency, customer experience, and employee happiness

With communication overload, messages across many channels, remote work, and global supply chain disruption, a strong communication workflow is more important than ever. This section expands on the common challenges logistics companies experience.

The next section will cover how to address these challenges and provide tactical solutions to create better communication workflows.

1. Missed messages result in lost business

Employees in the freight industry receive hundreds to thousands of emails every day. Without the proper streamlining of incoming communications—quotes, rate confirmations, and important customer context—messages slip through the cracks, resulting in a loss of business.

Teams also struggle with having clear ownership of incoming messages. This leads to employees duplicating work on the same customer issue because they are trying to respond to shippers and carriers as quickly as possible.

Lastly, manual sorting, deleting, and forwarding of emails takes up time that could be better used on high-impact work like checking on loads or sourcing carriers. With the right communication platform and the power of automation, teams in the freight industry can improve their communication workflows while increasing customer satisfaction.



2. Poor customer experience results in churn, negative reviews, and losing customers to competitors.

Customer experience continues to emerge as a top reason shippers use to select a 3PL.² Regardless of the current times, customers' expectations have not wavered. For the freight industry, there are a few common pitfalls that hurt the customer experience:

Slow response times, or even worse, completely missing important messages. When your inbox is flooded with requests and may require immediate action—there is an increased risk that important messages like quote and rate requests slip through the cracks.

Multiple employees respond to the same issue due to unclear task ownership. Logistics teams are fast-paced and strive to deliver top-notch customer service. But when a team doesn't have visibility into whether a customer has received a response, they may send a duplicate reply and create confusion.

Poorly designed communication workflows lead to long response times, missed messages, and duplicate replies. This results in poor customer experience which can quickly turn into churn, negative reviews, and moving on to a competitor for a better experience.

Long email threads and continuous email forwarding lead to inefficient handoffs during the shipment lifecycle. Sorting by email title to find the most recent version and then reading through a long email chain wastes valuable time. Your customers are left waiting to receive resolutions to their issues.



3. Low employee happiness impacts retention and productivity



Customer experience can impact employee happiness positively or negatively. When teams work together efficiently and handle customer requests in a timely manner, team morale increases. Employees can enjoy being able to do their job quickly and accurately when provided with robust operational processes.

On the other hand, when teams are drowning in email and messages are continuously falling through the cracks, morale plummets. Poor communication workflows result in extra work, no clear processes, and stress about customer issues being handled when they step away.

Creating a better communication workflow



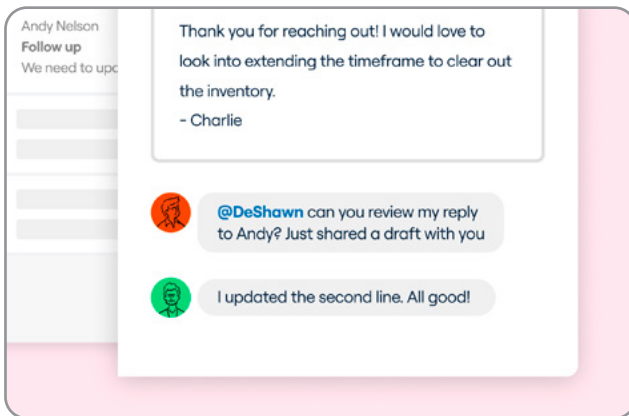
Great customer service starts with better communication. And for the freight industry, this communication generally happens over email. Typically, logistics companies rely on email distribution lists or a shared inbox to make sure teams have visibility into the right messages. This process quickly becomes a nightmare to manage due to high email volume, many people receiving the same email, and internal forwarding. Ultimately, traditional email tools like Outlook and Gmail end up [costing logistics companies revenue](#).

Logistics and transportation companies need a better solution for communicating with shippers and carriers. 3PLs rely on communication platforms like Front to streamline their communication workflow across the entire business. With Front, they can increase accountability, reply to critical messages faster, and make every customer feel like their only customer. Companies like MNX Global Logistics, OVRSEA, and Estes Forwarding Worldwide use [Front to fuel business growth](#), manage high email volume with ease, and improve internal collaboration. Below, we go into more detail about how they achieve these results.

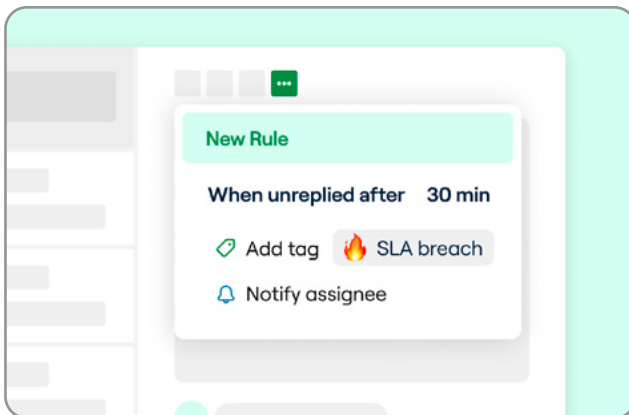
Being able to ensure quality customer service is the biggest differentiator in the freight industry. The key to a successful customer experience?

Reduce email volume and gain accountability with shared inboxes and automation

To overcome communication challenges in the freight industry, teams need two things:



Streamlined communication workflow that reduces email volume and duplication



Powerful automation and integrations that get the right message to the right team

Front provides logistics teams with a communication platform that makes it easier to focus on shippers, not inboxes. Work more efficiently, increase customer satisfaction, and improve all-around communication. Let's dive deeper into these two.

Streamlined communication workflow

Most logistics companies rely on distribution lists or shared inboxes to handle their high email volume. This is like using duct tape to fix your car—it keeps things from falling apart, but is a sub-par solution overall. In the end, customer experience suffers due to process inefficiency and lack of accountability.



Distribution lists send the same email to an entire team with little to no visibility into who has replied.



Shared mailboxes offer no way to track ownership or collaborate on communication, leading to duplicated and missed messages.

Front is a communication platform that is designed with teamwork and excellent customer service in mind. You get a personal inbox for tasks you need to complete, a team inbox that catches team requests, and the ability to send internal messages like in Slack or Microsoft Teams. This empowers teams to move faster and respond to every message with high-quality responses.

Estes Forwarding Worldwide implemented Front and [has seen an 80% reduction in email volume](#). They've also implemented rules that route messages to the right team member based on clients and keywords.

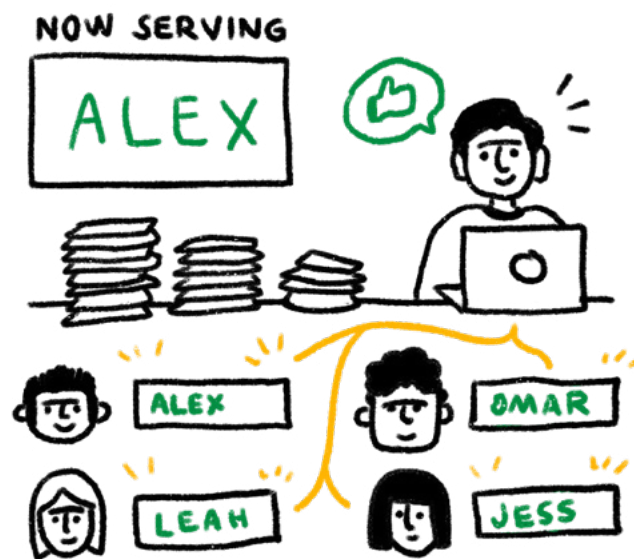


With Front, you can create designated team inboxes for each role and geographic function. Customer sales, carrier sales, operations, and accounting can all have their own inboxes for each pod. This new process reduces email volume in personal inboxes and allows your team to spend time on high-impact work. Everyone won't receive a copy of every email and relevant stakeholders can be looped in via a chat message—no more internal forwarding and sifting through long email threads.

**In the freight industry, time is money.
Front streamlines your communication
workflow and gives you time back.**

Powerful automation and integrations

Front gives logistics teams the ability to replace manual busywork with easy-to-build automation. Assign, escalate, or reply to messages based on parameters and rules that you define. For example, if one of your team members is responsible for a specific customer, you can set up a rule that assigns them as the owner of every email from that customer. That way, he can always deliver excellent customer service while building a relationship with the customer.



Automation gives teams the ability to eliminate duplicate work and increases productivity. Logistics companies like [Sennder](#), [Shaker Logistics](#), and [CLX Logistics](#) utilize a combination of email tagging and automation rules to route emails to the correct team members based on client or keywords. This ensures every message is handled on time.

Additionally, some 3PLs create rules that depend on where a request originated. If it comes from a company based in Chicago, it will be routed to the Chicago pod inbox. Finally, you can set rules that tag emails from VIP clients so they stand out. You can even get a reminder if they have gone a certain amount of time without a reply.

Logistics teams who automate manual processes set themselves up for success because they have more time to focus on customers.

BEFORE

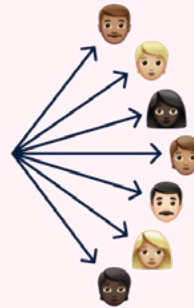


Shipper



Quote Request
Shipment Question

Distro List
Shippers@acme.com



- 7 copies of an email
- Unclear ownership
- Time wasted manually sorting, deleting, or passing

AFTER



Shipper



Quote Request
Shipment Question

Distro List
Shippers@acme.com

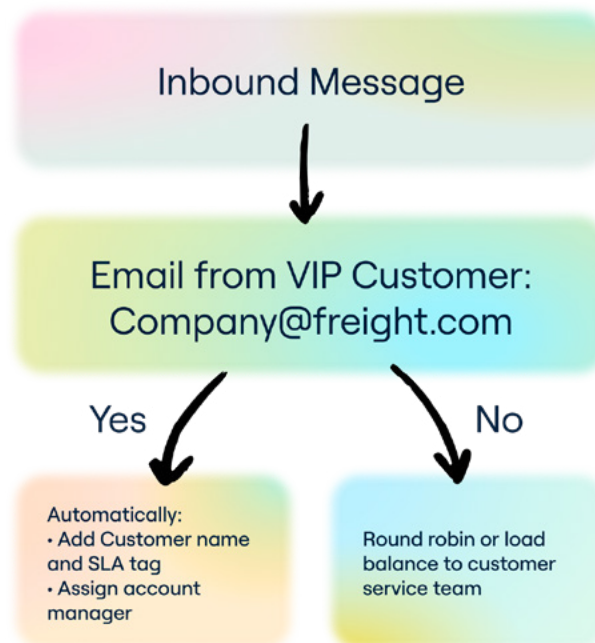


Visibility
Front Platform
Shared Inbox
Rule Engine Auto-Assignment

Assigned
Owner



- 1 copy of the email
- Clear ownership
- Time Saving
- Cost Saving
- Team has visibility if they need it (someone is out, manager, etc.)



Improve internal collaboration and eliminate context switching with comments and integrations



Logistics teams often rely on email forwarding and cc-ing as a way to share information internally. They also use a chat platform (e.g. Microsoft Teams) and TMS updates to share relevant information with their team. Information is scattered across multiple systems, resulting in wasted time and inefficient collaboration.

With Front, your emails, internal chat, and TMS data are all integrated into the same platform. This eliminates context switching and makes internal collaboration a breeze. Your team can work quickly and deliver superior customer service in a single platform. Keep all customer context and conversations in one place, saving yourself time hunting down information that is scattered across multiple systems.

Everything lives in Front

Important messages and context can easily get lost when they are spread across different systems like Teams, Slack, email, and your TMS. Front gives logistics teams a central hub to communicate with your customers while also bringing in information from relevant tools like Salesforce and your TMS.

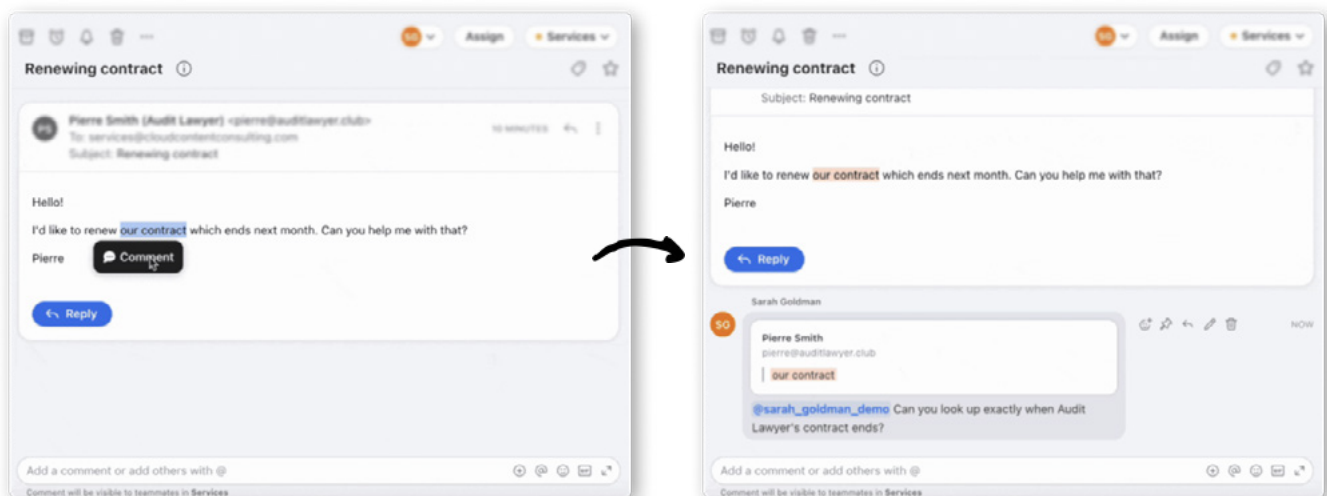
Logistics workers usually rely on email forwardings and CC's to get the attention of other team members. This leads to more emails and requires sifting through a long thread to understand the issue or full customer context.

With Front, teams can:

Use internal comments to collaborate on emails instead of creating new email threads, and highlight exactly what you are referring to when looping in a teammate.

Create smoother handoffs for greater internal collaboration.

Integrate with key systems to bring in relevant context.



Sennder, a leading Freight Forwarder in Europe, saves 3,500 hours every month with Front and integrations. They now have a 360-degree view of customer data and communications in Front and no longer have to shuffle between different tools.



With relevant information at your fingertips, you too can focus on resolving customer issues quickly and effectively, instead of chasing down the necessary context. Ultimately, this results in a stronger customer experience.



Drive operational efficiency with Front

Manually reading, sorting, deleting, and forwarding emails cost logistics teams valuable time. Front gives teams the ability to take this time back with powerful, customizable automation. Teams can create message templates for frequently asked questions, tag customers and send a reminder if they have not received a reply, and route messages to the right team members instantly. Load1, a transportation and logistics company, processes [400–600 automatic quotes per business day](#) using Front, leading to more business being won and more deals closed.

3PLs and freight forwarders often do not have the metrics they need to understand team performance. How many open issues is each team member working on? What is the average response time? What are your busiest times so that you can staff accordingly? Front gives teams visibility into metrics that matter. Inbox analytics help teams understand response time, missed messages, individual performance, request volumes, and more.

Insights from Front allow logistics companies to make data-driven decisions that can improve overall business strategy and planning. 3PLs like MNX Global Logistics use Front's performance metrics to [improve team engagement](#). Other transportation and logistics companies use Front analytics to do things like:



Measure, track, and enforce response time service level agreements



Adjust staffing resources based on peak message volume or types of incoming requests

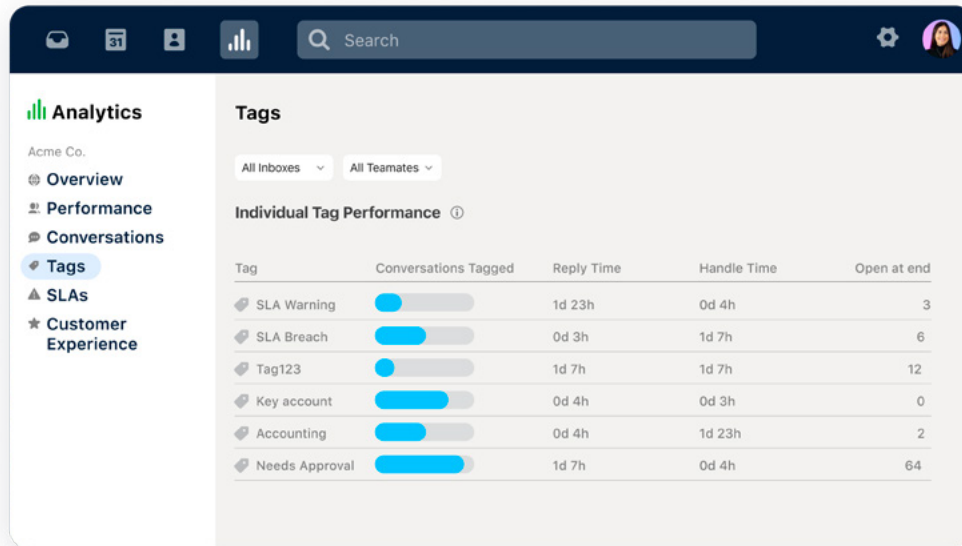


Track customer experience

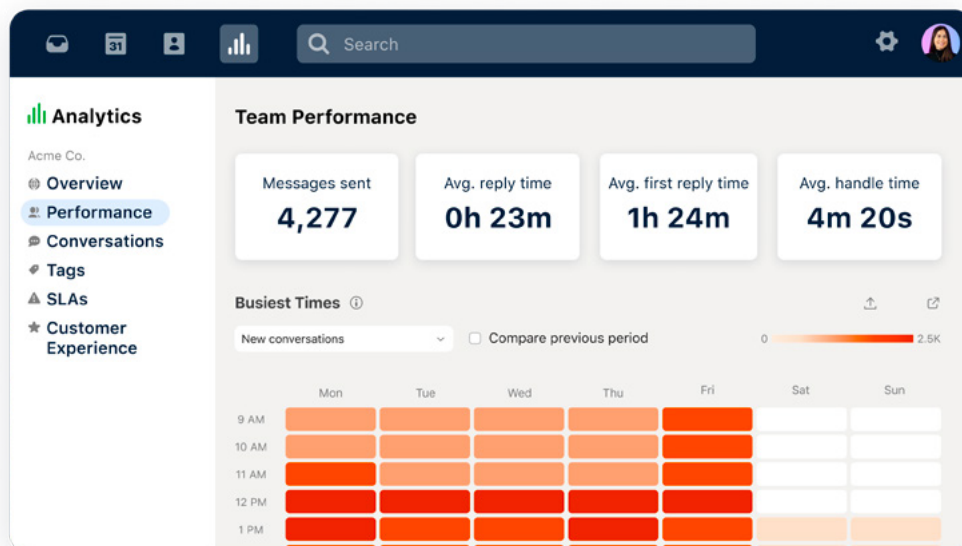


Reward productivity with visibility into team and individual performances

Keeping an eye on customer service metrics has significant value for logistics organizations. By measuring customer experience, teams can create data-backed improvement plans. Implementing these strategies will result in happier customers who are more likely to expand, renew, and refer your service to others.



Another important metric to measure is employee happiness. Understand your team's workload and how you can help. If you realize that a certain day has an exceptionally high amount of requests, bring in donuts to thank your team for their hard work. These insights allow you to boost team engagement and improve employee happiness, resulting in productive employees that stay for the long haul.



Best-in-class freight teams run on Front

Front has helped 500+ leading logistics companies improve their communication workflow to deliver excellent customer service and win more business. With Front, teams are overcoming communication challenges caused by the supply chain disruption. Efficient internal collaboration and powerful automation allow teams to focus on shippers and carriers, not on organizing their email.

3PLs that use Front effortlessly manage high email volume, respond to more messages faster, and deliver high-quality service that creates lifelong customers. Don't just take our word for it, hear from our customers.

“Front is a no-brainer for teams that have a high volume of email, share an inbox, or collaborate with each other to help service their customer. I love the platform. I wish I had it years ago.”

MARISSA TAYLOR

Manager of Business Process Improvement
Estes Forwarding Worldwide





“Front has transformed how we manage email. As a team, we can quickly sort and reply to the hundreds of emails we receive each day — with no time wasted. Front has enabled us to respond to every customer inquiry within minutes.”

EVAN MAZZOCCHI
Director of Operations
Epic Freight Solutions

“With Front, we’ve been able to do more with fewer employees. It allows us to do things we never could have done before.”

JORDAN KIDD
Director of Customer Service, Load Planning, and IT,
Freightworks Transportation & Logistics

ABOUT FRONT

Front is a communication hub for building strong customer relationships on digital channels. For many businesses, almost every customer conversation can make or break the relationship — the stakes are that high.

Front puts these conversations at the center of a team's attention and surrounds them with collaboration capabilities and contextual data from multiple systems. This lets teams stay focused on delivering timely, accurate and deeply personalized communications.

Nearly 8,000 businesses, including Shopify, Airbnb, Hulu, Lyft, and Mailchimp, use Front to build better customer relationships, one conversation at a time. To learn more, visit front.com.

APPENDIX

1 Overcoming Global Supply Chain Issues –
McKinsey & Company

2 3PL Selection: Rely on Customer Experience
to Identify the Right Partner



Ready to see a demo?

[Get started](#)

[Learn more](#)