

# Agentic AI, Shipper Expectations and the Advice Every Carrier CEO Needs for 2027



Overview

Work Orders Appointments Documents Invoices Payments Analytics Reports Settings [+ NEW LOAD](#)

Status	Mode	Origin	Destination	Driver	Equipment	Pickup Date	Delivery Date
Dispatched	FTL	Atlanta, GA	Dallas, TX	J. Martinez	Dry Van	05/18/2025	05/18/2025
In Transit	FTL	Chicago, IL	Chicago, TX	B. Thompson	Reeler	05/18/2025	05/20/2025
Booked	FTL	Chicago, IL	Memphis, TN	B. Anderson	Reeler	05/20/2025	05/20/2025
Booked	FTL	Houston, TX	Los Angeles, CA	M. Fat	Trailer	05/20/2025	05/21/2025
Booked	FTL	Houston, TX	Jessy Voo, TX	S. Patel	Dry Van	05/18/2025	05/23/2025
Booked	LTL	Los Angeles, CA	Sarasota, GA	T. Walker	Flatbed	05/20/2025	05/20/2025
Booked	FTL	Jessy Voo, TX	Sarasota, CA	C. Johnson	Dry Van	05/18/2025	05/20/2025
Dispatched	FTL	Savannah, GA	Rastonia, TN	C. Johnson	Dry Van	05/18/2025	05/20/2025

### AI Reasoning & Decision

#### Decision Summary

AI suggests accepting this load based on profitability.

Profitability Score	On-Time Probability	Capacity Match
87/100	92%	95%

#### Decision

Recommended Action

**Accept Load**

#### Key Reasoning

- High market demand on this lane
- Backhaul opportunity aligns with next load
- Driver available with required equipment

#### Dynamic Route & Load Overview

Kansas City, MO  
Drop  
May 21, 12:00

Load Details



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ **Most trucking technology is still procedural automation and not real AI.** Hill argues that much of what's marketed as AI is really complex math engines – and that the industry hasn't yet seen the true decision-making and reasoning that define it.
- ▶ **Shipper demands are becoming table stakes.** Tech-forward shippers are raising the bar on communication and visibility, and logistics departments without big budgets are counting on carriers and brokers to close the gap.
- ▶ **Agentic AI reduces the risk of automating bad processes.** Unlike procedural automation, agentic AI reasons toward outcomes, meaning organizations don't have to define the workflow first. The technology can identify and improve it.
- ▶ **Keeping an open mind is no longer optional for carrier CEOs.** Hill's advice heading into 2027: What worked a year ago has a whole new set of competitors. Leaders who rewire their operations for this moment will be the survivors and the thrivers.



## The conversation around AI in trucking has never moved faster, and for many carriers that speed is itself the problem.



**Mark Hill**  
Chief Executive Officer  
PCS Software



In a recent episode of [RoadSigns from Transport Topics](#), Mark Hill, Chief Executive Officer at [PCS Software](#), sat down with Managing Editor Seth Clevenger to work through the questions that are keeping operations leaders up at night: What does AI actually look like? What are shippers starting to demand? And, what do smart leaders need to do right now to stay ahead of a landscape that looks different every quarter?

Hill didn't come with predictions about a distant future. He offers a working assessment of where the industry is today, where it's heading fast and what it takes to build an organization that can move with it.

### When AI Meets Trucking Operations

One of the most important distinctions Hill draws is between what the industry calls AI and what AI is.

“There’s a lot of what I’ll call procedural automation happening out there,” said Hill. “There’s a lot of just very complex math engines that are trying to pass themselves off as AI.”

“Until folks start to see true decision-making and true insights that come from some of these tools, it’s going to be mind-blowing as they start to understand them better.”

Real AI, by his definition, involves genuine reasoning, decision-making and the ability to act autonomously on behalf of an organization. Most trucking technology today doesn’t meet that bar.

The gap matters because it shapes expectations and often disappoints them. Carriers who believe they’ve adopted AI but are really running sophisticated workflow tools will hit a ceiling. When true AI begins to roll out at scale, Hill predicts it will be a revelation.

“Until folks start to see true decision-making and true insights that come from some of these tools,” he said, “it’s going to be mind-blowing as they start to understand them better.”

The challenge for technology vendors and operations leaders alike is building on the right platforms, with the right capabilities, and doing it in a way that’s transparent enough for people to understand how the technology is performing.

### Shipper Expectations Are Already Changing

While carriers are still sorting out what AI really is, many of their shipper customers have already moved past the question. Hill points out that the logistics function inside large shipper organizations is part of a much bigger, often highly tech-forward company, one that is already deploying AI tools in manufacturing, retail, fulfillment and beyond.

“The demands on our customers are higher from those shippers that have very technology-advanced organizations internally,” said Hill. “Communication is one aspect of that.”



“What changes in this new world is when you have agentic AI, you have reasoning, you have decision-making capability on the part of the technology.”

The logistics departments of most shippers aren't large, and they're typically not heavily funded. That creates a clear expectation: The carrier or broker needs to do the heavy lifting on visibility, communication and planning support. Keeping shippers informed about where freight is and helping them plan their days, weeks and months is quickly becoming the minimum and not a differentiator.

“That's really going to become table stakes,” said Hill, “and continually need to be more advanced and more capable as demanded by the shipper.”

## The Problem With Automating Bad Processes – and Why It's Less of a Risk Now

The phrase has circulated in technology circles for decades: Don't automate a bad process. The logic holds that turning a flawed manual workflow into a faster automated one just produces flawed results faster. Hill acknowledges the concern, but he argues the calculus has shifted with [agentic AI](#).

“What changes in this new world is when you have agentic AI, you have reasoning, you have decision-making capability on the part of the technology,” said Hill. “A lot of times these technologies can in fact figure out what the workflow should be and they're executing it, but without you having to define what the workflow is.”

That's a meaningful distinction. Traditional automation requires humans to map every step of a process before it can be replicated.



“A lot of these AI tools can really help you investigate and interrogate your current processes, and then automatically come up with a better set of capabilities that are more in line with what customers are expecting.”

Agentic AI reasons toward outcomes. Organizations define what they’re trying to achieve, and the technology figures out how to get there and can identify where current processes fall short along the way.

The risk of automating bad processes goes down, Hill argues, while the opportunity to interrogate and improve those processes across dispatch, accounting and maintenance increases.

“A lot of these AI tools can really help you investigate and interrogate your current processes, and then automatically come up with a better set of capabilities that are more in line with what customers are expecting,” he said.

## **The Hardest Part Isn’t Building AI – It’s Keeping Up With It**

When Clevenger asked whether it’s harder to build the AI itself or to develop the organizational discipline to use it well, Hill’s answer was pointed: Right now, the pace of change is the hardest part.

“Just the pace of change with AI technologies is definitely very difficult,” said Hill. “Making sure that we’re building on the right platforms, building with the right capabilities and building it in such a way that it’s transparent for users — that they can understand how it’s being used, how to use it and what it’s doing.”

That challenge cuts across vendors and customers alike. Technology companies are racing to keep their platforms current. Carriers are trying to evaluate tools in a landscape that rewrites its own rules quarterly. The operational discipline to deploy AI well, establishing clear use cases, managing change and training people is a real and growing need. But it can’t be designed until the technology itself has stabilized enough to design around.

Hill sees that moment approaching. As these products mature and roll out more broadly, the work of helping organizations develop genuine operational discipline around AI will become the next critical challenge.

## **One Piece of Advice for 2027**

Given the pace of change, what’s the single most important thing a carrier CEO should be doing right now?

“Keep an open mind to new strategies and new paradigms,” said Hill. “The opportunities are being presented to us at an unbelievable pace. What worked two years ago, what worked a year ago, now there’s a

“Those that rewire their business to exploit these changes, they’ll really be the survivors and the thrivers.”



whole new set of options for any one of those decisions that are out there.”

It’s advice Hill says he applies to himself daily. The leaders who are going to come out ahead aren’t those who wait for the technology to stabilize or who make one big AI bet and move on. They’re the ones who stay curious, evaluate continuously and are willing to rewire their operations when something better comes along.

“Those that rewire their business to exploit these changes,” Hill said, “they’ll really be the survivors and the thrivers.”

**Bottom Line: The carriers that treat AI as a continuous strategy question — not a one-time implementation — are the ones who will be positioned to lead.**

The AI landscape in trucking is moving too fast for passive observation. Hill’s conversation with Clevenger is a useful benchmark for where serious operators should be focusing; distinguishing real AI from automation theater, getting ahead of rising shipper expectations and building organizations open enough to adapt when the next wave arrives. For carrier CEOs, the question isn’t whether AI will change the business. It’s whether the business is ready to change with it.



# ROADSIGNS

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Topics**

This article is based on an episode of RoadSigns, a podcast exploring the trends and technologies that are shaping the future of trucking. Check out the website to catch past and future episodes.

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