FREE EBOOK

The 12-Step Trucker Startup Playbook.

Every step you need — in order — to launch a legal, profitable trucking business. Built from my consulting framework and available free. Every step includes the recommended tools and partners I actually use.

YOUR ROADMAP FROM ZERO TO FIRST LOAD

Start a legal, profitable trucking business — step by step.

Every step below has a recommended tool or service — partners I actually use and would recommend to a friend starting out. Use the free courses and videos on the channel to go deeper on any step.

01 Form your LLC + get your EIN

Before you can do anything else, you need a legal business entity and a federal tax ID. Your LLC protects your personal assets; your EIN is the business equivalent of a Social Security number you'll need for banking, insurance, broker packets, and taxes. I now recommend **ZenBusiness** — priority processing and more included at every tier. (Bizee, my previous pick, still works if you'd rather use them.)

★ MOST PREFERRED · PRIORITY PROCESSING

zenbusiness ZenBusiness · LLC + EIN →

PREVIOUSLY RECOMMENDED

bizee formerly incfile Bizee · LLC + EIN →

02 Set up a business bank account

Do not mix personal and business money. Open a dedicated business checking account as soon as your LLC and EIN are active. Bluevine opens online in minutes with no monthly fees and no minimum balance — built for small business owners who don't want to walk into a bank branch.

bluevine Open a Bluevine account →

> Prefer a traditional bank? Chase and Bank of America also offer no-minimum business checking — any of them work, the important thing is keeping business money separate.

03

Apply for your Motor Carrier Authority

This is the big one — your MC number plus USDOT number from the FMCSA. You'll file through the FMCSA portal directly. Budget a few hours and read the instructions twice before you submit — mistakes here can delay your authority by weeks.

File at FMCSA →

04

Get your BOC-3 and UCR

BOC-3 designates process agents in every state you operate in — you need it before your authority activates. UCR (Unified Carrier Registration) is an annual fee that most new carriers forget about until they get a citation.

BOC-3 · $50 at Evilsizor → **UCR · $75 at ucr.gov →**

05

Get insurance

Pay your down payment close to the 21st day after applying for your authority. FMCSA enforces a mandatory 21-day waiting period, and you want your insurance to be effective a couple days prior so the insurance company has time to process the filings. Get this timing wrong and your authority won't activate on day 21.

Get a quote at Logrock →

06

Set up freight factoring and fuel cards

Factoring turns your unpaid invoices into same-day cash so you're not waiting 30–90 days for brokers to pay. Fuel cards give you discounts at truck stops nationwide. Both are essential from day one. Outgo is DAT's in-house factoring — same-day invoice funding, built directly into the DAT load board, and the back-office integration saves hours every week.

Outgo · DAT factoring →

07

Pass your DOT Physical Exam

You need a current DOT medical card to legally operate a commercial vehicle. Any certified medical examiner (most urgent care clinics) can do this — usually $80–$150, takes 30 minutes.

> Find a nearby certified examiner at **FMCSA's National Registry**.

08

Sign up for a load board

Load boards are where you find freight when you don't have direct relationships with shippers yet. DAT is the most-used in the industry; Truckstop is the other major player. I use both and recommend running the 30-day trial on each.

DAT Outgo DAT One · 10% off →

DAT Outgo Trucker's Edge →

truckstop.com Truckstop Pro · 20% off →

09

Shop for a truck that fits your budget

Don't buy the truck first. Seriously. Finish steps 1–8 before you even start shopping — that way you actually know what you need, what you can afford, and what loads you're going to haul with it. FT3 Capital specializes in financing new owner-operators with limited or no credit history.

FT3Capital FT3 Capital →

10

Install an ELD on your truck

FMCSA requires an electronic logging device on every truck running under its own authority. The ELD tracks your Hours of Service automatically — no paper logs, no guessing. Get it installed before you take your first load. Motive is what I run: quick install, straightforward app, and the fleet tools scale if you add trucks down the road.

Motive · ELD + fleet tools →

11

New Entrant audit phone call

About 30–60 days after your authority is active, FMCSA will mail you a letter asking for an audit call. Do it ASAP. It's easy — they just verify the information you submitted on your application. Dodge this and they can revoke your authority.

> There's no link for this one. Just pick up the phone when they call. Have your USDOT number, insurance policies, and driver qualifications ready.

12

Apply to brokers

Every broker has a different carrier packet process. Applying to multiple brokers early gives you more freight options when you're looking for that first load. Here are the ones I recommend starting with:

Landstar → TQL → C.H. Robinson → Coyote Carriers →

Choptank Transport → Trinity Logistics → Integrity Express →