



Welcome to Freight University, the online authority for building a dominant trucking business. Today's lesson is taught by your mentor, Michael Thomas—

Let's get straight to it. We're here to talk about the single most important skill that will determine your success: Freight Research.

Think of it this way: freight research is the engine, the map, and the fuel for your company. Without it, you're just driving random miles. With it, you control everything—your lanes, your equipment, your shipper relationships. Remember this: a license is not a business. A deal is. And every great deal begins with disciplined, strategic research.

This brings us to a new rule. The old role of the dispatcher is dead. It's evolving into something far more powerful: The Freight Researcher. The researcher's job is a continuous loop: they find the freight, coordinate the move, and then dispatch the truck. It's one seamless function, laser-focused on consistency and profit.

Today, you're going to learn: Why real trucking companies are built on research, not by surfing load boards. How to lock in your focus on one trailer type and one geographic footprint. How to use AI tools like ChatGPT and Gemini to perform deep, insightful freight research. How to gather, save, and analyze data so you can act on it decisively. And finally, how to build your very own AI agent—a custom GPT—to become your personal research assistant.

Let's dive in.

Section 1: Research First, Loads Second

Here's the core principle: surfing the spot market creates chaos. Research creates control.

Load boards only show you what's left over. It's the freight that nobody with a direct contract wanted. Research, on the other hand, shows you what's actually possible. It tells you which industries are shipping, which seasons are hot, and which lanes are profitable. It reveals who the shippers are, when they ship, and exactly what equipment they need.

The outcome is simple. You'll build repeatable, profitable lanes, not chase one-off miracles. Consistency creates control.

Section 2: The Freight Researcher Replaces the Dispatcher

So, what does the daily life of a Freight Researcher look like? It's a six-step loop.

1. Discover: You find targeted freight—a specific industry, a specific product, a specific trailer.
2. Qualify: You dig into the details: the volume, the frequency, the dock hours, and the rules.

3. Coordinate: You align capacity, whether it's your own trucks, your partners, or owner-operators.
4. Dispatch: You send the truck with precise instructions, handling check calls and any exceptions.
5. Score: You measure the lane's performance—KPIs, margin, on-time percentage, and dwell time.
6. Expand: You take that performance data back to the shipper and expand the deal—asking for drop trailers, weekend coverage, or their overflow freight to broker.

This is the mindset: Research → Relationship → Recurrence.

Section 3: Focus: One Trailer, One Region, One Identity

To succeed, you must focus. The trailer is king. Choose one and master it. Dry Van, Reefer, Flatbed—it doesn't matter which one you pick, but you must pick one. Your trailer choice defines your entire business: your shipper list, your busy seasons, and how you get paid.

Next, define your region. Pick a home market with a 150- to 300-mile radius. Map out what I call your "Triangle of Control"—a repeatable route with two headhaul directions and a solid backhaul plan. Think Dallas to Houston to San Antonio, or Chicago to Indy to Detroit. Own that triangle.

Finally, define your identity. Are you a carrier, a broker, or a hybrid? Just remember the rule: the license is just a tool. The deal is the business.

Section 4: Your AI Stack: Using ChatGPT and Gemini for Freight Research

Now, let's make this practical. You can use AI as your research accelerator. Here are some copy-and-paste prompts you can use in ChatGPT or Gemini. Just replace the fields in brackets with your own information.

First, to build your prospect list, use this prompt: "Act as a freight market analyst. Find 25 direct shippers in the Food and Beverage industry that regularly ship with Refrigerated Trailers in the Dallas-Fort Worth region. For each, list their product, city, typical lanes, shipping days, and the contact role to approach. Output this as a table I can paste into Google Sheets."

Next, to understand a specific lane, use this prompt: "Create a lane dossier for Dallas, TX to Atlanta, GA for Refrigerated Trailers. Include headhaul/backhaul balance, peak seasons, common accessorials, typical dwell times, and the top 10 shippers and receivers in that lane. End with 10 discovery questions I can ask a shipper on this lane."

And finally, to create your outreach scripts, use this prompt: "Write a 120-word opener email and a 45-second phone script for a reefer provider based in Dallas offering consistent coverage on the Dallas to Atlanta lane. Focus the script on solving common pain points like weekend coverage and offering drop-trailer options and KPI reporting."

These prompts will save you hundreds of hours and give you a massive competitive edge.

Section 5: Building Your Own Freight Research AI Agent

Ready to take it to the next level? You can build your own custom GPT. It's simple.

1. First, create a private AI agent in ChatGPT and name it "Freight Researcher Pro."
2. Next, upload your spreadsheets—the prospect lists and lane data you generated with the AI prompts.
3. Then, give it these instructions: "You are Freight Researcher Pro. Your job is to store and reason over my freight research. Always think in this order: Equipment, Geography, Industry, Lanes, Contacts, KPIs. Remember every company, lane, and rule I give you. When I paste data, normalize it to our schema and update my Top-25 list. Never invent data. Ask only one clarifying question at a time."

Your workflow will be transformed. After every call with a shipper, you'll just paste your notes and ask your agent to summarize, update the status, and generate your next steps.

Section 6: The Seven-Day Research Sprint

Alright, here's your assignment. I want you to put this into action with a seven-day sprint. The goal is to produce one lane dossier, one Top-25 prospect list, and book one qualified pilot opportunity.

- Day 1: Choose your trailer and your 300-mile region.
- Day 2: Use AI to generate your Top-25 list, then validate 10 of those contacts with a quick call or email.
- Day 3: Build your first lane dossier and draft your outreach scripts.
- Day 4: Make 25 contacts. Log the results. Schedule five discovery calls.
- Day 5: Hold those calls. Listen for their pain points and submit a value promise.
- Day 6: Secure one to three pilot loads. Set the KPIs you'll track: on-time percentage, dwell time, and margin.
- Day 7: Debrief on the pilots, send a one-page recap to the shipper, and ask for a weekly schedule.

This is how you turn theory into real, tangible business.

Closing Coach's Note

Listen to me. You are not just chasing freight. You are designing a system.

Pick one trailer. Pick one region. Do the research every single day. Use AI to see patterns faster. Present value to shippers, prove it with KPIs, and then scale your operations with a solid TMS like GoGo Trucker.

Protect your assets and your margins with disciplined preventive maintenance and quality products like the LFS Nano Engine Systems Kit.

Do this, and I promise you, one great contract will outrun a hundred random loads.

Consistency creates control. And control creates profit.

Now, go build your empire.