Freight Broker Startup Checklist

A step-by-step readiness checklist for establishing and operating a freight brokerage.

Complete each phase in order. Do not begin arranging freight until all required authority, financial security, registrations, agreements, and operating systems are active and verified.

Training is always first. Never attempt to start a freight broker business before you are trained.

Phase 1 — Business Foundation

- ☐ Choose and verify the business name.
- ☐ Form the business entity and obtain formation documents.
- ☐ Obtain an EIN.
- ☐ Open a dedicated business bank account.
- ☐ Create a business email, phone number, and mailing address.
- ☐ Prepare a startup budget and working-capital plan.

Phase 2 — Authority & Compliance

- ☐ Create or verify the required federal account credentials.
- ☐ Apply for broker authority and obtain identifying numbers.
- ☐ File the required process-agent designation.
- ☐ Secure the required broker financial security.
- ☐ Complete applicable registration requirements.
- ☐ Confirm authority is active before arranging transportation.
- ☐ Create a calendar for renewals, filings, and annual requirements.

Phase 3 — Contracts & Protection

- ☐ Obtain legal review of broker-carrier and broker-shipper agreements.
- ☐ Prepare a shipper packet and carrier onboarding packet.
- ☐ Establish cargo-claim, fraud, double-brokering, and identity-verification procedures.
- ☐ Determine insurance needs beyond legally required financial security.
- ☐ Create privacy, record-retention, and data-security procedures.

Phase 4 — Operating Systems

- ☐ Select a TMS and load-board solution.
- ☐ Set up business accounting and invoicing.
- ☐ Create rate-confirmation and load-tracking procedures.
- ☐ Build standard email templates and call scripts.
- ☐ Create document folders and naming standards.
- ☐ Establish after-hours and emergency escalation procedures.

Phase 5 — Carrier Management

- ☐ Define carrier qualification standards.
- ☐ Verify operating authority and safety information.
- ☐ Verify insurance directly and monitor expiration dates.
- ☐ Screen for fraud indicators and identity inconsistencies.
- ☐ Collect signed agreements and required documents.
- ☐ Create carrier performance notes and a do-not-use process.

Phase 6 — Customer Development

- ☐ Define your client, commodities, and service area.
- ☐ Build a targeted prospect list.
- ☐ Prepare a value statement and sales presentation.
- ☐ Set daily outreach and follow-up goals.
- ☐ Create a customer qualification questionnaire.
- ☐ Establish credit-review and payment-term procedures.

Phase 7 — Launch Readiness

- ☐ Complete a test load workflow from quote through invoicing.
- ☐ Verify all templates contain correct company information.
- ☐ Back up critical records.
- ☐ Confirm cash-flow plan for carrier payments and customer terms.
- ☐ Create weekly KPI tracking.
- ☐ Set a formal launch date.

Launch Approval

- ☐ Authority verified active
- ☐ Financial security verified
- ☐ Contracts ready
- ☐ Carrier vetting procedure tested
- ☐ Customer credit procedure ready
- ☐ Accounting and invoicing tested

- ☐ Emergency contacts documented

Planned launch date: ______________________________________

Owner signature: ____