



Navigating change in the trucking industry

FreightWaves talks 2024 outlook with Sarah Wicker, VP of sales and marketing at EROAD

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Change is a constant in the transportation industry. Technological advancements, regulatory developments, environmental considerations and more require trucking businesses to continually adapt to an ever-evolving operational landscape.

Staying informed is crucial to navigating change and [thriving amid uncertainty](#). To that end, FreightWaves spoke to Sarah Wicker, EVP Sales and Marketing for telematics

provider **EROAD**, about the challenges that trucking businesses are facing in 2024 and the solutions that are available to help them achieve success.

FREIGHTWAVES: What's the 2024 outlook for the trucking industry?

WICKER: There are many factors shaping the 2024 industry outlook, of course. There's the economy, regulation and, increasingly, the demand for greater sustainability, among many others.

The effects of COVID, supply chain disruption, inflation and related issues are still rippling through the economy, and the economic challenges of 2023 have carried over into this year. However, industry analysts are forecasting at least a modest recovery later in 2024. When it comes to regulation, there is a lot to keep an eye on this year, including enforcement modernization, electronic roadside inspections, a final decision on compliance, safety and accountability system improvements, updates to the DataQs system and Crash Preventability Determination Program, and more. Finally, there is the growing emphasis on sustainability, which is being driven by federal and state emissions goals, economic factors, and evolving consumer demand.

When you combine the unknowns of the economy, changing regulations and environmental considerations — along with perennial industry issues like fuel costs, the driver shortage and lawsuit abuse — an overarching theme of uncertainty emerges. However, the good news is that there are plenty of tools available that can help carriers not only successfully navigate that uncertainty but also gain a competitive edge and thrive.

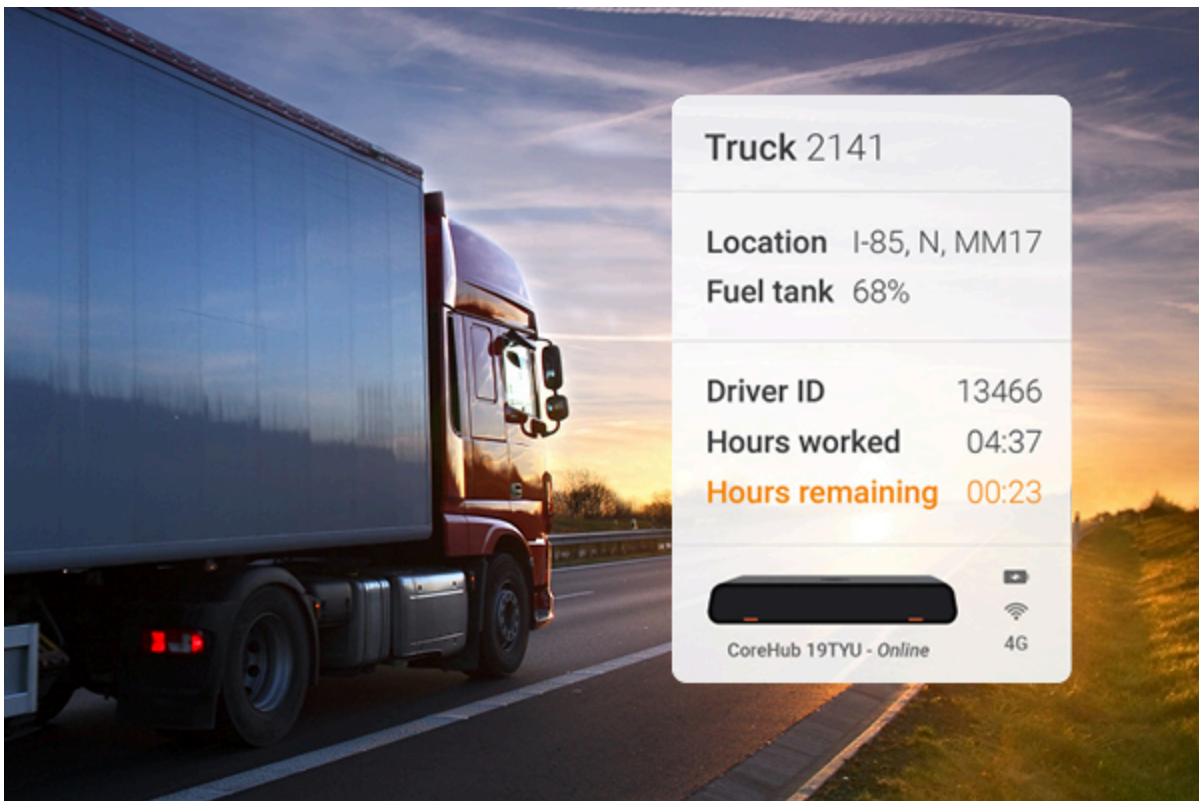
FREIGHTWAVES: How is EROAD helping fleets address these challenges?

WICKER: Fundamental to solving a problem is understanding it. That's where EROAD starts; we understand the challenges that fleets face. We work closely with clients and industry partners to develop solutions that are purpose-built to overcome those specific challenges while delivering added value and return on investment and setting the course for operational excellence.

While something like ensuring regulatory compliance is a core function of telematics, the technology has evolved to do so much more — and there are exciting developments on the horizon. More and more, the ability to collect, understand and apply data intelligence from vehicles and other assets will mean the difference between operations as usual and operational transformation. Simply put, businesses that embrace the growing data revolution in the transportation industry position themselves for success; those that don't are at risk of being left behind.

EROAD offers much more than just off-the-shelf telematics. Our solutions deliver actionable insights to improve fleet performance. We empower transformation by helping fleets increase efficiency and productivity, manage safety and compliance, and measure sustainability.

Finally, we believe technology should solve problems, not cause headaches. That's why ease of use — for all stakeholders — is a driving principle when we develop solutions.



(Image: EROAD)

FREIGHTWAVES: What should businesses consider when selecting a technology partner?

WICKER: First off, it's important that fleets seek a true partner, rather than just a vendor. A vendor ships a product and cashes your check. A partner, on the other hand, truly seeks to understand your business challenges and provides solutions to specifically address them.

In addition, fleets should consider the full breadth of a provider's solutions. Let's say that you find a technology provider that has a specific solution that you're looking to implement immediately. Before you make a final decision, it's important to look beyond that specific solution and determine whether the provider has the full range of solutions that you may ultimately want to implement.

For instance, does that ELD provider also have video telematics, trailer tracking, door sensors and so on? And, if so, do they do a good job on all of them? Technology should simplify things so you can focus on your core business. Working with multiple technology providers and systems can quickly get complicated, creating new operational headaches.

Innovation is another key consideration when looking at fleet technology providers. Are they forward-looking? Do they have their finger on the pulse of the industry? Do they stay abreast of the changing regulations? In trucking, the business and regulatory landscape is always evolving, and your challenges and needs shift accordingly. It is crucial to partner with a technology provider that is proactive and responsive to support your success today and in the uncertain future.

Finally, selecting a provider with a robust and growing integration network is key to getting the full benefit of any technology solution. You want solutions that interact and play well with the larger fleet technology ecosystem — from TMS and dispatch software to freight visibility, fuel cards and more.

FREIGHTWAVES: Is there anything else fleets should know about adopting new technology?

WICKER: It's important for fleets to understand that they don't have to do it all at once. A targeted — or incremental — approach to technology adoption can help businesses address their biggest challenges first while still managing costs, streamlining implementation and setting a course for overall operational transformation.

[Click here](#) to further explore how technology can help fleets thrive during challenging times.

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