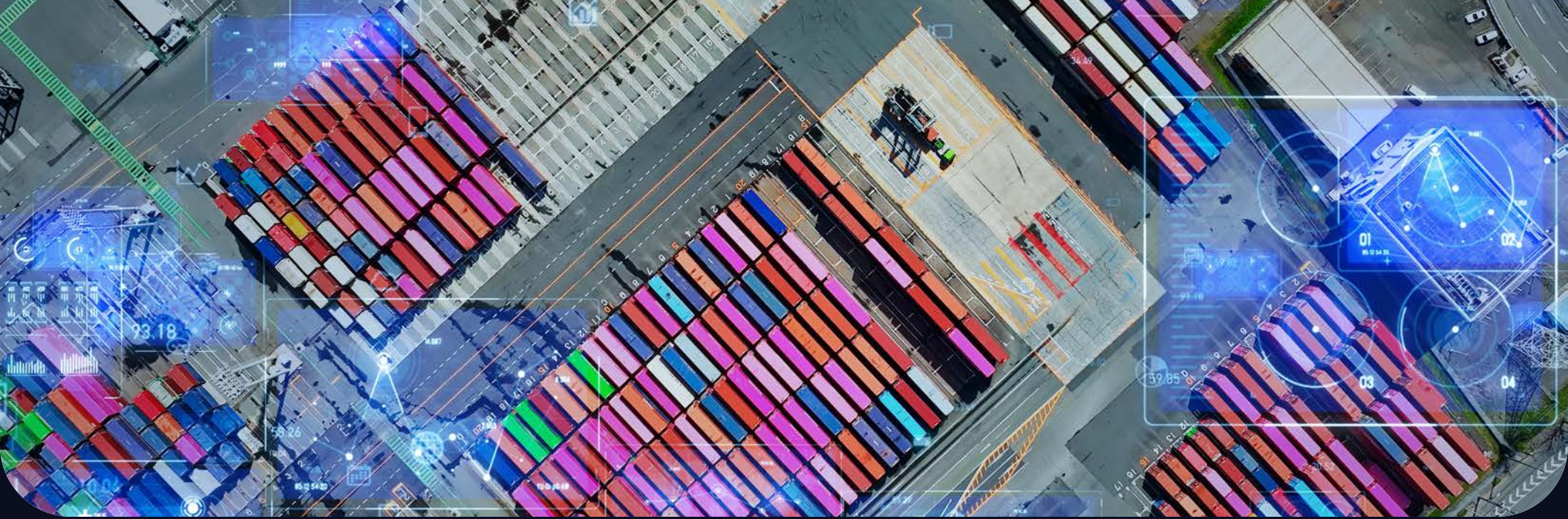




FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU AUTOMATE YOUR YARD





Yard automation is having a moment.

Vendors are pitching it. Teams are proposing it. The business case often looks good on paper.

But implementations stall, pilots don't always scale, and adoption can be sluggish. To avoid those challenges, it's important to **ask the right questions** before anyone signs a contract.

This guide covers five that matter.

ONE

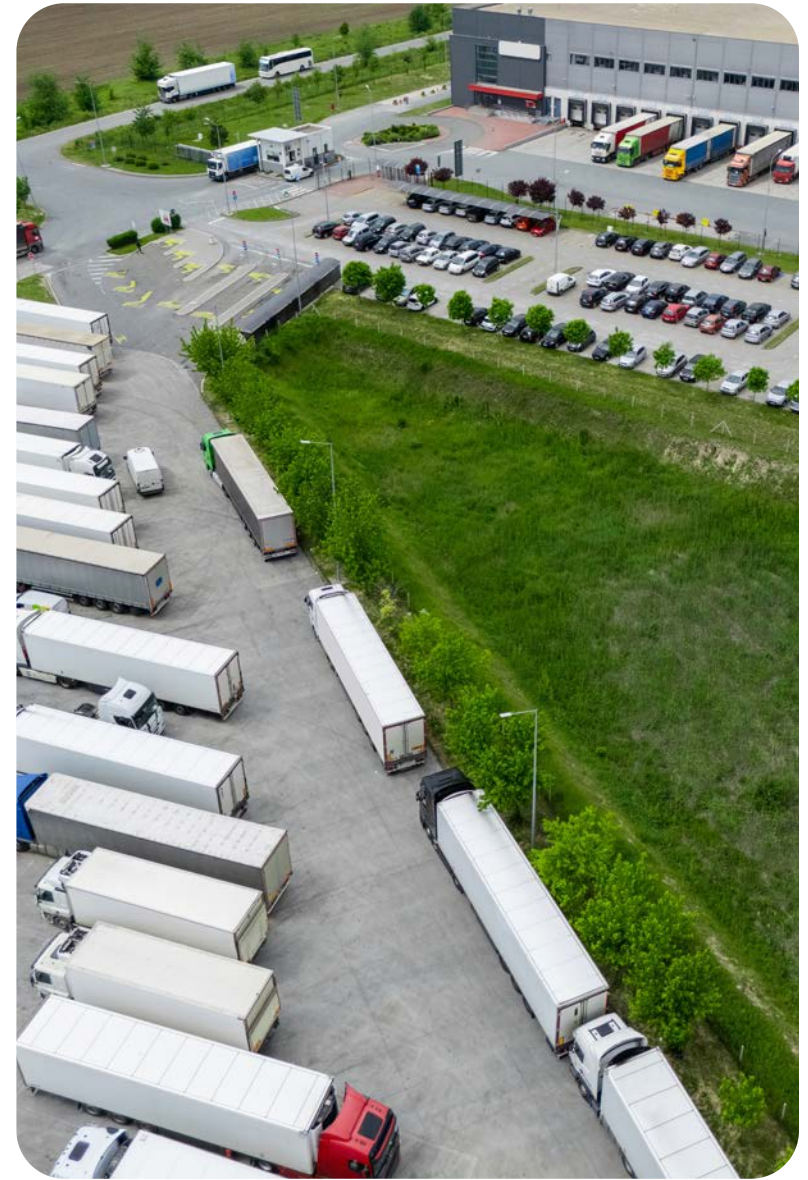
DOES YOUR YARD SYSTEM KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING THROUGHOUT YOUR NETWORK?

A standalone yard management system can tell you where trailers are parked. That's useful. It's also limited.

The higher-value decisions depend on context that lives beyond your property line. Which trailer has priority inventory for a production line that's running low? Which inbound shipment just slipped three hours and needs its appointment moved? Which carrier is 20 minutes out and needs a dock assigned now?

If your yard system can't access real-time network data — shipment status, ETAs, order priorities — it's a digital map. Helpful, but not smart.

What good looks like: The system adjusts appointments automatically when ETAs change. Dock assignments are driven by predictive ETAs and what's on the trailer, not reactive decisions based on arrival time. Alerts surface based on business impact, not just time on site.



TWO

ARE YOU CONSOLIDATING DECISIONS OR JUST ADDING ANOTHER SYSTEM?

Most facility teams aren't working off clipboards anymore. They have systems. The problem is they have too many of them.

One platform for appointment scheduling. Another for yard management. A TMS handling carrier communication. A WMS that needs to know what's on the trailer before it can plan labor. Maybe a gate system on top of all that. Not to mention a radio system your veteran spotters still demand you use. Each one holds a piece of the picture, and someone on the team is the human glue keeping them in sync — toggling between tabs, copying data across platforms, making phone calls to fill in what one system can't see from another.

It's important to investigate whether the technology reduces the number of decisions your team has to make, or just changes where they make them. If your scheduler still has to check one system for the ETA, another for dock availability, and a third to notify the carrier, you haven't automated scheduling. You've just spread it across three logins.

What good looks like: One system handles the routine coordination end-to-end — appointment, dock assignment, carrier notification — without someone bridging the data manually. People manage what's unusual, not what's predictable.



Kimberly-Clark

Kimberly-Clark reduced gate check-in times from 8–10 minutes to an **average of 1:48**, and check-out times to **28 seconds** — with **83% of site volume** running through automated kiosk technology.

THREE

WHO ACTUALLY USES THIS — AND WILL THEY?

Enterprise software often gets bought by people who won't use it daily. That's a problem for yard systems, because the value depends on adoption by gate guards, spotters, dock workers, and facility supervisors.

If the interface is clunky, they'll work around it. If it adds steps to their day, they'll resist it. If it doesn't make their job noticeably easier, it becomes shelfware.

Ask how the system fits into existing workflows. Ask what onboarding looks like for frontline workers. Ask whether the people who'll use it daily had any input into the selection. Better yet, ask to talk to them at a reference site.

What good looks like: Frontline workers prefer the system to the old way. Adoption doesn't require mandates or monitoring.



“I was visiting a site after we implemented the solution and talked to a team member who had been there doing the job the same way for 35 years. He did not stop talking for 10 minutes about **how easy the solution was, how much he loved it, and how it automatically slotted for him and reduced his burden.** To hear that from the people using the solution every single day — that's the greatest testimonial.”

VP OF TRANSPORTATION, FORTUNE 100 RETAIL

FOUR

WILL IT MAKE YOUR TENTH FACILITY BETTER THAN YOUR FIRST?

Most yard systems are sold site by site. You deploy at one facility, configure it, get it running, and move on to the next. Each site becomes its own little island with its own data and its own learning curve.

That works fine as a deployment model. It's a lousy model for getting better over time.

A system processing data across 30 or 40 facilities should be surfacing patterns no single site team could see on its own. Which locations are turning trailers fastest? Where are detention charges clustering, and why? What do your best-performing facilities have in common that the others don't? If you can't answer those questions from one dashboard, every facility is solving the same problems independently, and none of them are learning from the others.

Ask whether the system benchmarks facilities against each other. Ask whether insights from one site can be applied across the network without rebuilding the configuration. Ask how the platform gets smarter as you add locations, not just bigger.

What good looks like: Performance data aggregates across your network automatically. You can identify what's working at your best sites and replicate it. The twentieth facility benefits from everything the first nineteen taught the system.



FIVE

CAN YOU START SMALL AND SCALE, OR IS IT ALL-OR-NOTHING?

Some implementations require months of configuration before a single truck checks in. Others let you go live at one facility in weeks and expand from there.

Ask about the minimum viable deployment. Ask how long until you're seeing real data from real operations. Ask what happens when you want to add a second facility, or a tenth.

The answers reveal whether you're buying a product or a project.

What good looks like: First facility live in weeks, not months. Adding sites doesn't require starting over. Configuration scales without re-implementation.



TRANE
TECHNOLOGIES

Trane Technologies saw payback on their yard automation investment in just **3 months**, driven by detention fee reductions alone.

 **UNITED STATES
COLD STORAGE**

US Cold Storage captured **36–40 hours of productivity** gains in its first 8 weeks.



FourKites helps the world's largest brands get more from their existing facility assets by connecting yard operations to real-time supply chain data. The result is faster throughput, lower detention costs, and automation that scales across a network — without adding headcount.

Want to learn more? We'd love to talk.