

The yard was full. The fleet was idle.

FIELD REPORT
DEPOT OPERATING MODEL
Q3–Q4 2025

Container Co. had added 4,000 boxes to its fleet in two years and earned less from it. Every depot was hitting its cost-per-lift target and none of them knew how long a container sat before it could be leased again. It turned out to be six and a half days.

CLIENT	SECTOR	FLEET	ENGAGEMENT	FEE BASIS
Container Co.	Container leasing & depot ops	38,000 dry boxes · 14 depots	11 weeks · 3 consultants, 1 data engineer	Fixed, milestone-billed

-55% YARD DWELL 6.4 days on the ground, down to 2.9	+13 pts FLEET UTILISATION 71% of the fleet on lease, now 84%	+\$12.9M ANNUAL REVENUE \$1,840 per box per year, now \$2,180	4 months PAYBACK Fee recovered before the pilot closed
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WHAT WE FOUND

Container Co. leases dry boxes to freight forwarders on the US west coast. Depot managers were paid against **cost per lift** — a number that rewards moving containers cheaply and is indifferent to whether they ever move again. Nobody owned the days between a box coming through the gate and being ready to lease again.

Those days lived in three systems: a spreadsheet gate log, a three-part paper inspection form scanned nightly, and the repair vendor's portal. We reconstructed eighteen months of it by hand. The baseline was **6.4 days of average dwell**, of which 4.1 were spent waiting for a decision rather than for work.

WHY IT HELD

Nothing here needed capital. Release-ready now goes up on the same board as the lift count and is read out every morning, so the two numbers argue with each other in public. Six months on, dwell has not drifted back.

WHAT WE CHANGED

One measure replaced the scorecard: **days from gate-in to release-ready**. Everything else followed from making that number visible by depot, by shift, by day.

- 01

One inspection record
The three-part form collapsed into a twelve-field capture taken at the gate on a handset. Photographs attach to the box, not to an email.
- 02

Repair triage at the gate
Anything under \$180 goes straight to the bench with no quote cycle. That is 61% of jobs and it removed a two-day round trip from each one.
- 03

Vendor terms re-cut
Two of nine repair vendors were dropped; the rest moved to a fixed menu price for the eleven most common defects.
- 04

Scorecard and handover
Dwell carries 40% of the depot bonus. Meridian ran the board for four weeks, then handed it to the regional ops leads.

“We didn’t buy anything. We stopped measuring the wrong thing, and 3.5 days fell out of the yard.”

SAM ORTIZ · VP OPERATIONS, CONTAINER CO.

WHERE THE 3.5 DAYS CAME FROM

STAGE OF THE TURN	BEFORE	AFTER	DAYS SAVED
Gate-in to inspection complete	1.9 d	0.4 d	1.5
Inspection to repair decision	2.2 d	0.3 d	1.9
Repair queue and bench time	1.8 d	1.6 d	0.2
Release paperwork and re-listing	0.5 d	0.6 d	-0.1
AVERAGE DWELL PER TURN	6.4 d	2.9 d	3.5