The Dispatch Software Buyer's Guide

What this is, and what it is not

This is a working document for evaluating dispatch platforms. It is written to be useful whether or not you ever buy from TaxiDex, and most of it applies whoever you end up choosing - including if you choose to stay where you are.

It is not a research report. We are not going to quote you industry averages we cannot source, or case studies from fleets we have not run. Where a number appears here it is either a published price, a figure commonly quoted in this market and flagged as such, or arithmetic you do on your own fleet's numbers. Everything else is a question to ask, not a fact to accept.

The most valuable part is the vendor questions. Each one comes with what a bad answer sounds like, because in a sales call the evasion is the information. A vendor who cannot answer a pricing question directly on a call will not become clearer once you have signed.

Ask these of every vendor. Ask them of us.

Before you talk to anyone: the requirements worksheet

Write these down before your first demo. The most expensive mistake in software buying is letting a vendor's demo define your requirements - you walk out impressed by something you did not need and forgetting the thing that would have broken you.

Fill this in with your own operation's numbers. Nobody else's are relevant.

- How many vehicles do you license today? How many are actually earning in a normal week?
- How many drivers hold a login? How many work in a given week? These two numbers are usually different and the gap is the single biggest driver of what different pricing models cost you.
- What is your driver-to-vehicle ratio? One driver per car, or two or three on shifts?
- What is your peak hour, in real terms - day of week and clock time?
- How many jobs go through the busiest hour of your busiest day?
- What proportion of your work is account or corporate, and how is it invoiced now?
- What proportion is pre-booked versus on-demand?
- What is genuinely non-negotiable? Write no more than five things. If your list has fifteen must-haves, you do not have a list, you have a wish.
- What are you actually trying to fix? Name the specific failure that started this search. "Better software" is not an answer; "we lose 20 minutes a shift re-allocating by hand" is.

Keep this in front of you in every demo. When a vendor shows you something impressive that is not on this sheet, note it and move on.

Question 1: How does your pricing model behave when my fleet changes?

The headline rate matters less than the model. Two vendors at similar per-unit prices can produce very different bills for the same fleet.

The two common models:

Per vehicle. You pay for each car you license. This favours you if you run multiple drivers per vehicle - a car worked by a day driver and a night driver is billed once. It works against you if you carry spares, seasonal vehicles, or cars parked over the winter, because a vehicle that earns nothing still bills.

Per active driver. You pay for drivers who actually work. This favours you if you carry idle vehicles or seasonal capacity. It works against you if you run a high driver-to-vehicle ratio, because three drivers sharing one car is three billed seats.

Neither is inherently better. Which one wins depends entirely on your ratio, which is why the worksheet asks for it. Do the arithmetic both ways on your own numbers before you let anyone tell you which model is fairer.

Ask exactly this:

- I park a car for six weeks in January. What happens to my bill, and on which cycle?
- I take on a driver for Friday and Saturday nights only. What does that cost me?
- A driver leaves mid-month. When does the seat stop billing - immediately, next cycle, or end of term?
- What is your definition of "active"? Logged in once? Completed a job? Held a licence?
- Is there a monthly minimum, and at what fleet size does it stop being the number I actually pay?
- Do you meter trips? Are there caps, allowances or overage charges?

A bad answer sounds like: "It's flexible, we'll work something out." "That depends on your contract." "Nobody really asks that." Any answer where the definition of a billable unit is not a single sentence. If a vendor cannot tell you on a call what happens when you park a car, you will find out on an invoice.

For reference, cloud dispatch in this category generally runs somewhere around £7 to £15 per unit per month, where a unit is a driver or a vehicle depending on the vendor. Rates commonly quoted in the market include roughly £11.40 for Autocab, £12 per vehicle for iCabbi, £15 per licence for Cordic and $28 for TaxiCaller. Treat every one of those as indicative - most vendors in this category quote per fleet rather than publishing a price list, so the only number that means anything is the one in your own written quote.

Most vendors also apply a monthly minimum. Ask what it is. For a small fleet the floor, not the per-unit rate, is your real bill.

Question 2: What is in the base rate, and what is a paid module?

This is where quotes diverge most, and it is almost never visible on a pricing page.

Ask for a written list of what is included at the rate you have been quoted, then ask specifically about each of these. Do not ask "is everything included" - ask item by item.

- Passenger app and driver app
- Web booking widget for your own site
- Card payments - and separately, who takes the processing cut and at what rate
- SMS and push notifications - per message, bundled, or your own gateway
- Account and corporate customer invoicing
- Reporting, and specifically scheduled or exported reports
- API access
- Additional dispatcher seats or operator logins
- Extra depots, branches or franchise sub-fleets
- Sandbox or test environment
- Software updates and new features released during your term

Ask exactly this:

- Which of the things you have shown me today are not in the price you just quoted?
- What did your last three customers add on after signing?
- If you release a major feature next year, do I get it or is it an upgrade?

A bad answer sounds like: "Everything's included" delivered quickly and without a document. It is almost never true, and the vendor knows which line items they are leaving out. A confident vendor will hand you the list. Get it in writing and attach it to the contract, because "included" in a sales call is not a contractual term.

Question 3: What is the contract term, and how do I leave?

The exit terms are the part you negotiate hardest and think about least. You are negotiating them at the moment of maximum optimism, which is exactly when you have the most leverage and the least motivation to use it.

Ask exactly this:

- What is the minimum term? Multi-year commitments are still common in this market - a 36-month term is commonly quoted for some legacy platforms, though treat that as indicative rather than a contract anyone has shown us.
- What is the notice period, and when does the renewal window open? A 90-day notice clause you discover in month 34 costs you another year.
- Does it auto-renew? On what notice?
- What does it cost to leave in month six if it simply is not working?
- If I pay annually and cancel mid-term, what is refundable?
- Does the price escalate at renewal, and is there a cap in writing?

A bad answer sounds like: "Everyone signs three years." "The discount only applies on the longer term" - which may be true, but price the difference and decide with the number in front of you. Also treat "we've never had anyone leave" as a non-answer: it tells you nothing about the mechanism and quite a lot about the pitch.

Before you sign anything, put your own contract end date and notice period on the calendar. It is the single cheapest piece of migration insurance available.

Question 4: Who owns my data, and how do I get it out?

Assume, for the purposes of this question, that you will one day leave. Every operator signing today believed otherwise at the time.

Your data is your customer list with saved addresses, your account customers and their credit terms, your drivers with document expiry dates, your vehicles and licence data, your zones, your tariffs and your trip history. It is the accumulated asset of your business and it is the thing a platform can most effectively hold hostage.

Ask exactly this:

- Who owns this data contractually? Show me the clause.
- Can I export it myself, on demand, without asking you?
- In what format? CSV or SQL - something re-importable - or a PDF report?
- Does the export include trip history, or only current records?
- On termination, what do I get, in what window, and at what cost?
- If I ask for an export tomorrow, how long does it take?

A bad answer sounds like: "You can request a report." A report is not an export. "We'd handle that for you as part of offboarding" - for a fee, on their timeline, during the exact period when your relationship is worst. Also watch for export that technically exists but only through a support ticket: a platform that makes leaving procedurally painful is telling you how it intends to keep you.

The right answer is that you can pull your own data, in an open format, whenever you like, and the contract says so.

Question 5: What does onboarding actually include, and who does it?

"We'll get you set up" covers everything from a login and a PDF to a named person rebuilding your tariff structure. Find out which.

Ask exactly this:

- Is data migration from my current system included, or quoted separately?
- Which specific things do you migrate - customers, drivers, vehicles, zones, tariffs,

trip history? Ask about trip history explicitly; it is the one most often dropped.

- Who rebuilds my zones and fare rules - you or me?
- Do I get a named contact through go-live, or a shared support queue?
- What is the training, how long, and is it on my live data or a demo tenant?
- Is training for dispatchers, drivers, or both?

- What is the one-off setup fee, in writing, before I commit?

One-off onboarding fees in this market are commonly quoted anywhere from £1,200 to £15,000 depending on fleet size and migration scope. That range is wide enough that it is usually the largest single variable between two otherwise similar quotes - and it is the number most often left until after you have emotionally committed. Get it early.

A bad answer sounds like: "That's all included, don't worry about it" with no document. Or a setup fee that appears for the first time in the contract. Or "we'll scope that after signature" - scoping after signature means the price is discovered after your leverage is gone.

Before you accept any migration plan, ask one operational question: will both systems run live at the same time during the switch? If the answer is no, the vendor is proposing a hard cutover with no rollback, and you should treat that as a serious risk regardless of how confident they sound.

Question 6: Whose brand is on the app, and who controls the listings?

If your passengers download an app with a vendor's name on it, you are building someone else's brand with your marketing spend, and your customer relationship is mediated by a company you may one day leave.

Ask exactly this:

- Is the passenger app published under my company name, or yours?
- Is it my own listing in the App Store and Google Play, or am I a tenant inside a shared app?
- Whose developer account owns the listing - mine or yours?
- If I leave, does my app listing survive, and do my installed users come with me?
- Who handles store submission, review rejections and OS-version updates?
- Are store submission and re-submission costs included, or billed each time?
- Can I use my own domain for web booking and tracking links?

A bad answer sounds like: "It's white-labelled" without specifics - white-label covers everything from your logo on their app to a genuinely separate listing you own. The developer-account question is the one that separates the two, and it is the one vendors are least keen to be pinned down on. If they own the listing, they own your installed base.

Question 7: What is support like at my peak, not yours?

Support hours are quoted against business hours. You do not have a business-hours problem. You have a Friday-23:40 problem, a New-Year's-Eve problem, and an airport-closed-and-every-phone-ringing problem.

Ask exactly this:

- What are your support hours in my timezone, including weekends and public holidays?
- Who is on at 23:00 on a Friday - an engineer, a first-line agent, or a voicemail?
- What is the channel - phone, chat, email, ticket? Is phone available out of hours?
- What is your target response time for "dispatch is down", and is it contractual or aspirational?
- Is there an SLA with financial consequence, or a best-effort statement?
- Show me your status page and your incident history for the last twelve months.
- What happened during your last significant outage, and what did you tell customers?

A bad answer sounds like: "24/7 support" with no detail behind it. Ask what 24/7 means - a monitored inbox is technically 24/7. A vendor with real out-of-hours cover will tell you who is on and how to reach them without hesitating. A vendor without it will talk about their commitment to customer success.

Ask for a reference customer in your own timezone and vertical, and when you get them on the phone, ask one question: what happened the last time something broke at night?

Question 8: Can I see it running, on real data?

A feature on a slide is a plan. A feature in a sandbox with three clean records is a demo. Neither tells you how it behaves at 23:00 with a driver who has gone off-radio and a customer on hold.

Ask exactly this:

- Show me this on live data with a real fleet's volume, not a demo tenant.
- Which of the things you have shown me today are on the roadmap rather than released?
- Give me a sandbox and let my dispatcher - not me - try it for a week.
- Show me the awkward paths: multi-drop, wait-and-return, card declined at the door, driver no-show, a job that needs reallocating mid-trip.
- What does a dispatcher do when the automation gets it wrong?

A bad answer sounds like: any use of "coming in the next release" for something you were shown as though it existed. Also: refusing a trial to your actual dispatchers. The person who will use this eight hours a day should touch it before you sign, and a vendor confident in the product will want that.

Put your most sceptical dispatcher in the demo. They will find in twenty minutes what you would find in month three.

The scorecard

Score each vendor 1-5 on each line, weight the rows that matter to your operation, and fill it in during the call rather than from memory afterwards. Buying decisions play out over weeks and memory is a poor scorecard.

These criteria are written to be answerable about any platform.

- Pricing model matches how my fleet actually runs (ratio, seasonality, shift patterns)

- Total cost at my size is known in writing, including minimum and setup
- Base rate inclusions documented and attached to the contract
- Contract term and exit costs acceptable
- Data export is self-service, open-format and contractually mine
- Migration scope explicit, with parallel running offered
- Onboarding includes a named contact and training on live data
- App published under my brand, on a listing I own
- Support cover verified against my actual peak hours
- Core dispatch workflow demonstrated on real data, not slides
- Awkward paths (multi-drop, no-show, reallocation) handled visibly
- My dispatchers trialled it and would use it
- Reference customer in my vertical and timezone spoken to directly

One-page call checklist

Print this. Take it into every vendor call.

- [ ] Fleet numbers written down before the first demo (vehicles, active drivers, ratio, peak hour)
- [ ] Top five non-negotiables agreed with the buying group
- [ ] Billable unit defined in one sentence
- [ ] Parked-vehicle and shift-driver scenarios priced
- [ ] Monthly minimum confirmed
- [ ] Trip metering, caps and overage confirmed or ruled out
- [ ] Written list of base-rate inclusions obtained
- [ ] Payment processing rate and who takes the cut confirmed
- [ ] SMS and notification costs confirmed
- [ ] Setup fee quoted in writing before commitment
- [ ] Minimum term, notice period and auto-renewal understood
- [ ] Renewal price escalation capped in writing
- [ ] Data-ownership clause read, not summarised
- [ ] Self-service export tested or demonstrated
- [ ] Trip history confirmed as included in export
- [ ] Migration scope itemised, trip history included
- [ ] Parallel running confirmed available
- [ ] App-store developer account ownership established
- [ ] Own domain for web booking and tracking confirmed
- [ ] Out-of-hours support tested by calling it at your peak
- [ ] Status page and 12-month incident history reviewed
- [ ] SLA has financial consequence, or noted that it does not
- [ ] Sandbox given to dispatchers for a week
- [ ] Roadmap features separated from released features in writing
- [ ] Reference customer in your vertical and timezone called
- [ ] Your own contract end date and notice period diarised

Where TaxiDex stands on our own questions

It would be dishonest to hand you a list of questions and then dodge them. Here are our answers, including the ones that are not flattering.

Pricing model. We bill per active driver, not per vehicle: £11 per active driver per month on Starter (1-20 drivers), £9 on Professional (21-100) and from £7 on Enterprise (100+). There is a £79 monthly minimum, about $100. We do not meter trips - there are no trip caps, allowances or overage charges. Park a car and it does not bill; stand a driver down and the seat stops billing on the next cycle.

Be aware of what that model means for you specifically. If you run two or three drivers per vehicle on shifts, a per-vehicle competitor may well be cheaper on the subscription line, and you should count both. As an illustration you can repeat with your own figures: 30 active drivers on Professional is 30 × £9 = £270 a month. Against a per-vehicle vendor at a commonly quoted ~£12, a 30-vehicle fleet is around £360 - but if those 30 vehicles are worked by 45 drivers, the per-vehicle model wins. The arithmetic is yours to do; we would rather you did it than took our word.

Setup. There is a one-time setup fee, separate from the monthly rate. It covers app-store deployment under your brand, configuration of your zones, vehicle classes and fares, dispatcher training, and data migration. It is scoped to your fleet and quoted up front on your demo call. We do not publish a number because it genuinely varies with scope, but you will have it before you commit, not after.

Contract. No multi-year lock-in. Monthly or annual billing, cancel any time. Annual billing carries a discount and is non-refundable mid-term - factor that in if you take it.

Data. Yours. Exportable while you are a customer and on the way out: customers, drivers, vehicles, tariffs and trip history, in a usable format.

Track record - the honest part. TaxiDex is a young product. We have not yet taken a large legacy fleet through a full migration, and we are not going to imply otherwise by showing you logos or numbers we have not earned. What we publish instead is our method, in public and in full, at taxidex.com/migration-protocol - including the parts that apply if you migrate to someone else. If that is not enough evidence for a decision of this size, that is a reasonable position to take, and we would rather you weighed it honestly now than felt misled later. Ask us for a reference and we will tell you exactly who we have and what they can speak to.

Apply the same scepticism to us that you apply to everyone else on your list. A vendor who flinches at these questions has told you something. So has one who does not.

If migration is the part you are weighing, the full protocol is public and ungated at taxidex.com/migration-protocol.