FREE FRAMEWORK · FROM THE OPERATORS BEHIND APPIUS

The NEMT Scaling Framework

An operating system for a calm, profitable, sellable NEMT company.

Six components, one weekly rhythm, seven numbers. Written from more than ten years of running a profitable NEMT fleet.

Why this exists

Most NEMT companies don't fail because they run out of trips. They fail because they run out of owner.

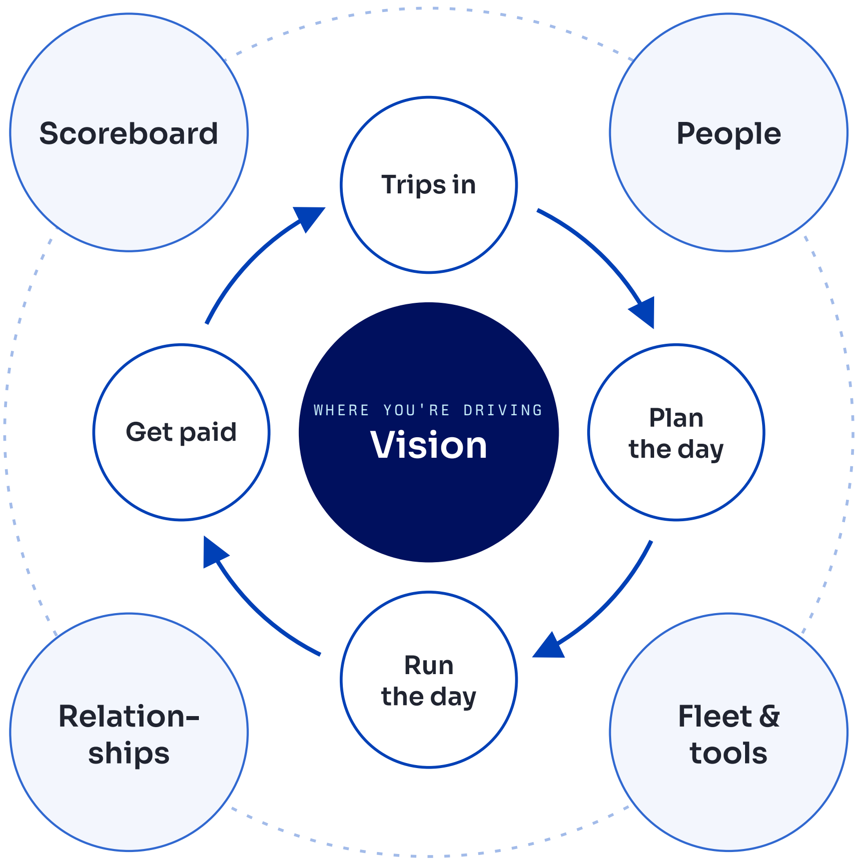
The phone starts at 5am. A driver calls out, a broker adds fourteen trips, a wheelchair van won't start, and billing slips to the weekend again. The owner holds the whole operation in their head, margins swing month to month, and after ten years of that the business is worth almost nothing to a buyer, because the business is the owner.

It doesn't have to run that way. One of our partners has operated Ride Well Transit for more than ten years, profitably, through broker changes, fuel spikes, and a pandemic. What made that possible wasn't luck or heroics. It was treating the company as a system: the same six things, managed on the same rhythm, measured by the same numbers, year after year.

The NEMT Scaling Framework is that system, written down. It's free. Use it with a whiteboard and a spreadsheet if you want. The goal is a company that grows without getting louder: calmer weeks, steadier margins, and a business someone would actually pay for.

The six components

Every NEMT company, whether it runs 5 vehicles or 150, is the same six components. Companies feel chaotic when one or more of them is unmanaged. The framework is simply this: name each component, put one person and one rhythm on it, and score it honestly.



Vision at the center. The daily loop turns around it. Four foundations keep it turning.

01 Vision

Where the business is going, and what it is worth when it gets there.

Not a mission statement. Three numbers your whole team knows: trips per day you're building toward, the margin you won't go below, and the fleet size that gets you there. Plus one question you revisit every quarter: if a buyer walked in tomorrow, could they run this company without you? That question is the sharpest diagnostic in NEMT, because everything a buyer would pay for (documented processes, a team that runs the day, contracts that aren't friendships) is also what makes the company calm to own.

UNMANAGED LOOKS LIKE

The goals live in the owner's head. The team finds out the plan changed when the schedule changes.

ASK YOURSELF

- Can your dispatcher state this year's target?
- Does anything in the company run for a full week without you touching it?

02 People

Three seats run an NEMT company: drivers, dispatchers, and the back office that bills and collects.

The component isn't "hire good people." It's making sure every seat has a name, every role is written down, and no seat depends on a single irreplaceable person.

The one that kills companies quietly: recruiting as a panic response. Drivers turn over in this industry. If you only recruit when someone quits, you're always short, always paying overtime, and always accepting whoever applies. A standing pipeline (applications reviewed weekly, even when fully staffed) turns your biggest recurring emergency into a routine.

Same logic in the office: a second person who can run billing, a dispatcher who can cover intake. If one resignation letter can stop cash collection, that's not a staffing issue, that's a structural one.

UNMANAGED LOOKS LIKE

Hiring starts the day someone quits. Billing lives in one person's head.

ASK YOURSELF

- If your best dispatcher gave notice today, what breaks?
- How many days until a new driver application gets a callback?

03 The daily loop

An NEMT company is one loop that runs about 260 times a year: trips in, plan the day, run the day, get paid.

- **Trips in.** Broker files, facility calls, and portal trips land in one place, checked for eligibility and rates before they're accepted, not after they're run.
- **Plan the day.** Every trip assigned to a driver and a time before the day starts, built on actual drive times, not habit.
- **Run the day.** Cancellations, call-outs, will-calls, and reassignments handled as they land, with the plan updated instead of abandoned.
- **Get paid.** Every completed trip documented and submitted while it's fresh. Same-day billing is the difference between finding a denial in 2 days and finding it in 45.

Here's the test of a well-run NEMT company, and it sounds backwards: the days are boring. Not slow, boring. The loop absorbs a cancelled dialysis run or a driver call-out without anyone raising their voice, because handling exceptions is part of the loop, not an interruption to it.

UNMANAGED LOOKS LIKE

The plan is rebuilt from scratch every morning. Billing happens in a month-end marathon, and denials surface after the resubmission window is half gone.

ASK YOURSELF

- What time of day is every trip assigned?
- How many days pass between a trip completing and its claim going out?

04 Fleet & tools

The physical machine: your vehicles, and the software that moves them.

Vehicles are the asset side. Preventive maintenance on a schedule, not on a breakdown. A spare ratio that lets you lose a van without losing a route. A replacement plan tied to mileage, so a dead transmission is a calendar event instead of a crisis.

Software is the multiplier side. The bar to hold it to: does it plan the day faster than your dispatcher can, keep up when the day changes, and hand billing what it needs without re-keying? If your dispatch software is really a screen your team works around with paper and memory, it's not a tool, it's furniture.

UNMANAGED LOOKS LIKE

Maintenance happens when a vehicle dies, preferably mid-route. One person knows how the software works, and they're on vacation.

ASK YOURSELF

- When was your last mid-route breakdown, and was it predictable?
- Could a new dispatcher run tomorrow using only what's in the system?

05 Relationships

The contracts and credentials the whole company sits on: brokers, facilities, and compliance.

Brokers first. Run the numbers per broker, per quarter: revenue, profit per trip, denial rate, days to payment. Most operators who do this for the first time find that their biggest broker is not their best broker. You can't fix a contract you haven't measured, and you can't negotiate without knowing your cost per mile.

Facilities second. Direct agreements with dialysis centers, day programs, and skilled nursing facilities pay better and cancel less than broker trips, and they're relationships you own. One new facility agreement a quarter compounds fast.

Compliance third, and on a calendar, not in a scramble. Driver credentials, vehicle inspections, insurance renewals, broker re-credentialing: every expiration date on one list, with a lead time. An expired credential doesn't just cost a fine, it can park a vehicle or freeze a contract.

UNMANAGED LOOKS LIKE

One broker is 70% of revenue and nobody knows the margin on their trips. An audit letter triggers a week of panic.

ASK YOURSELF

- What's your profit per trip on your largest broker?
- What credential expires next, and when did you last check?

06 Scoreboard

The numbers, looked at weekly, on the same day, by the same people.

Seven numbers cover an NEMT company:

- **Profit per trip**: revenue minus direct cost, per completed trip
- **Profit per mile**: the number that catches deadhead bleeding
- **Monthly margin**: the trend line that tells you if growth is working
- **On-time performance**: the number your brokers score you on
- **Deadhead percentage**: empty miles as a share of total miles
- **Days to payment**: completed trip to cash in the bank
- **Driver turnover**: the leading indicator for every other number

The discipline matters more than the dashboard. A weekly 30-minute review of seven numbers beats a monthly P&L from the accountant, because a P&L six weeks after the fact is an autopsy. The scoreboard is a pulse.

UNMANAGED LOOKS LIKE

The accountant's P&L is the only scoreboard. OTP is discovered when the broker calls about it.

ASK YOURSELF

- What was your profit per trip last week?
- Who besides you knows?

The ladder: Chaos to Sellable

Managing the six components moves a company up a ladder. Every NEMT company sits on one of these rungs:

1 **Chaos**

The owner is the system. Every day is improvised, margins are a surprise, and a two-week vacation is unthinkable. Most of the industry lives here, some of it for decades.

2 **Control**

The daily loop is written down and the scoreboard is live. Days are predictable. Fires still happen, but they're handled by process, and the same fire doesn't happen twice.

3 **Calm**

The team runs the loop without the owner in it. The owner's week is spent on brokers, facilities, and hiring (the components that grow the company) instead of inside the day-of scramble. Margins hold steady enough to plan around.

4 **Sellable**

The company runs, grows, and collects without its founder. Documented operations, a management rhythm, diversified contracts, clean numbers. This is what a buyer pays real multiples for. And whether or not you ever sell, a sellable company is the best kind to own: it's the same company that gives you your evenings back.

You climb one rung at a time, and you climb by fixing components. Score yourself 1 to 10 on each of the six, pick the lowest, and spend a quarter on it. That's the whole method.

The operating rhythm

The framework runs on four cadences. None of them are long meetings.

CADENCE	WHAT HAPPENS
Daily	The loop: trips in, plan the day, run the day, get paid
Weekly	Scoreboard review: the seven numbers, 30 minutes, same day every week
Monthly	Fleet check (maintenance, upcoming replacements), A/R review (what's unpaid and why), recruiting pipeline check
Quarterly	Per-broker profitability review, compliance calendar sweep, vision check: the three numbers, and the buyer question

Where software fits

You can run this framework on a whiteboard. Operators did for decades. But three of the six components are exactly what software should carry for you: the daily loop (planning the day and re-planning it as it changes), the scoreboard (numbers that update themselves instead of waiting for month-end), and the billing tail of every trip.

That's the part we build. Appius is NEMT software that tells you what to do next: it plans the day, replans it when the 9am cancellations land, and turns completed trips into clean claims and live per-trip profit numbers. Built by the same operator experience behind this framework. The framework is free either way, but if you want the loop and the scoreboard to run themselves, that's the product.

The NEMT Scaling Scorecard, a free self-assessment that scores your company on all six components, is coming next. You're already on the list.

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