

**IMPORTER**



**EXPORTER'S**

**GUIDE TO**

**PROJECT SHIPPING SUCCESS**



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# LET'S CHART A SMARTER COURSE FOR INTERNATIONAL PROJECT FREIGHT

If you're responsible for importing or exporting oversized, non-containerized cargo, you already know this isn't business as usual.

Whether it's breakbulk, out-of-gauge, or individually handled equipment, project freight doesn't just raise the stakes: ***It changes the game entirely.***

Maybe your last shipment got hung up at customs due to a missing document. Or maybe your heavy-lift cargo sat at a port terminal racking up demurrage charges while your team scrambled to find a compatible hauler.

If these scenarios sound familiar, you're not doing anything wrong — ***you're just working in one of the most complex corners of global logistics.***

Unlike standard containerized loads, project cargo type shipments carry tighter timelines, higher price tags, and far greater risk. Every mile, transfer, and touchpoint introduces the possibility of delays, damages, or compliance issues.

And when you're relying on fragmented providers, juggling inconsistent communication, and navigating border bottlenecks or congested ports, success can start to feel out of reach.

**But complexity doesn't have to mean chaos, and challenges don't have to lead to failure.**

## ***It's time to take back your control.***

ATS International, sister company of Anderson Trucking Service (ATS), has been helping importers, exporters, and project freight shippers navigate complicated freight moves for decades — and we leveraged that industry expertise to create The Importer/Exporter's Guide to Project Shipping Success.

This guide is packed full of insider strategies to help you reduce uncertainty, improve predictability, and ultimately move your project freight with fewer surprises and more peace of mind.

We'll break down the defining characteristics of project freight, arm you with the right vetting criteria, and explore services that can dramatically increase flexibility and reduce cost.

Whether you're moving turbines, steel structures, oversized machinery, or any other project type freight the knowledge in this guide will help you make informed, strategic decisions so your next project shipment arrives on time, intact, and without the drama. Let's get started.





# KNOW YOUR CARGO: PROJECT FREIGHT 101



Before you can ship project freight successfully, you need to understand what puts it in a category all its own.

Not every oversized (OS) load qualifies as “project freight,” but the ones that do share characteristics that make them **more complex, more sensitive to error, and more dependent on specialized handling.**

## What Sets Project Freight Apart?

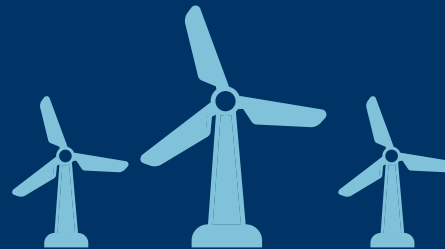
**Project freight** refers to cargo that can't be moved in a standard container because of its size, weight, shape, or configuration. These shipments typically include:



### Non-Containerized Cargo

A broad category describing any freight that doesn't fit within the dimensions of a standard or high-cube 20- or 40-foot container. This includes everything from oversized equipment shipped on flatbeds or breakbulk vessels to bundled steel beams or wind turbine components.

Non-containerized cargo may be moved using special open-top containers, flat racks, mafis, or no conveyance at all.



### Out-of-Gauge (OOG) Freight

A specific type of non-containerized cargo that exceeds the standard container's length, width, or height. Think wind turbine blades, industrial tanks, utility transformers, or large generators.

OOG cargo often requires specialized conveyance types, but may need to be shipped as breakbulk if it's too large.



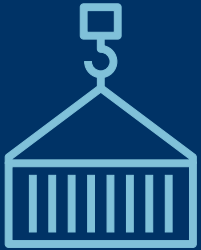
### Breakbulk & Individually Handled Pieces

Items that must be loaded, transported, and offloaded individually rather than as part of a containerized unit.

Breakbulk freight often requires the use of cranes, rigging teams, or heavy-lift equipment.

## Why it matters:

These physical and logistical differences definitely make the process of shipping interesting — and complicated. **The very nature of project freight increases:**



### Handling Complexity

Every load must be planned and executed with extreme precision, often involving custom lifting or lashing strategies and specialized equipment.



### Permitting Requirements

Oversize and overweight freight frequently requires route-specific permits, civilian and/or police escorts, and jurisdictional approvals, especially when crossing state or international borders.



### Cost Exposure

With so many variables — weather, port congestion, equipment availability — a missed step can quickly inflate costs through demurrage, detention, or re-handling fees.

**In short, the freight itself introduces risk before it even leaves the dock.** And that's exactly why understanding its unique characteristics is the first step in reducing uncertainty and increasing control.

Because once you know what you're really moving, you can start planning how to move it smarter.

# CHOOSE THE RIGHT PROJECT FREIGHT PROVIDER:



## QUESTIONS TO ASK

Project freight providers are responsible for moving your cargo, yes — but they're also responsible for managing the **complexity inherent in those moves**. Choosing the wrong one can mean missed milestones, customs hang-ups, or surprise costs that blow your budget. Asking the right questions upfront can save you weeks (and thousands of dollars) down the line.

Use these eight questions to vet potential project freight providers and ensure they're truly equipped for the job:



### 1 Will they manage the entire move, or only parts of it?

**Project freight success depends on continuity.** A provider that only handles one leg of the journey forces you to coordinate handoffs between multiple players, each with their own systems, timelines, and standards. That's a recipe for miscommunication. **Look for a provider that can offer true end-to-end visibility and control.**



### 2 Do they have experience with international out-of-gauge and breakbulk cargo?

Not all freight is created equal — and neither is freight expertise. **Experience with palletized loads or standard containers doesn't translate to international project freight.** You want a provider who knows how to plan international routes, secure the right permits and customs documentation, and safely handle and transport complex specialized cargo every step of the way.



### 3 Do they offer bonded storage or FTZ access?

Bonded storage and Foreign Trade Zones (FTZs) allow you to defer duties and better manage customs timing. **These options are especially valuable when dealing with international shipments, staggered deliveries, or regulatory uncertainty.** If your provider can't offer them, you could be paying more (and waiting longer) than necessary.



### 4 Can they provide transloading and heavy-lift capabilities at terminals?

Project freight often moves through multiple modes (vessel, rail, truck), which requires seamless transloading at terminals. **If your provider can't lift, reconfigure, or re-secure cargo at these critical junctures, your shipment is vulnerable to delays and damage.** Ask about their equipment, personnel, and processes.



### 5 Do they have secure yards near ports or border crossings?

Strategic yard locations allow freight to move faster through chokepoints and reduce reliance on long-haul drayage or storage bottlenecks. **If your provider's assets are located too far from the action, you're likely adding unnecessary time, cost, and risk to your supply chain.**



### 7 Do they offer project management and milestone tracking?

Project freight is often part of a larger capital project or construction timeline. You need a provider that can integrate with your schedule, communicate clearly at every phase, and provide milestone-level updates so you're never in the dark about your freight's status.



### 6 Can they handle customs documentation and compliance?

Permits, duty classifications, import/export documentation — it's a *lot* to track, and **a single error can stall your cargo for days.** Make sure your provider offers in-house customs expertise or strong brokerage partnerships to keep things moving smoothly.



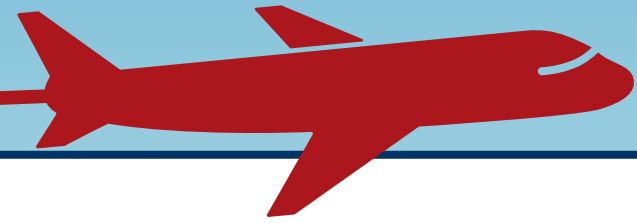
### 8 Will you have a single point of contact?

Nothing derails momentum faster than bouncing between contacts, voicemail boxes, and email chains when something goes wrong. **A single, accountable point of contact ensures questions get answered, problems get solved, and your shipment keeps moving.**

## PROJECT PRO TIP

Don't just listen to the answers — **look for specifics.** The more confident and detailed a provider is in explaining how they meet these criteria, the more likely they are to deliver when it counts.

# RED FLAGS TO WATCH FOR



**Is that prospective provider's pitch masking a lack of true capability?  
Keep an eye out for these warning signs during your vetting conversations:**



**Vague answers to questions about permitting, transloading, or customs compliance**

» If they can't explain how they handle it, they may not handle it at all.



**Limited or no experience with out-of-gauge, breakbulk, or oversize cargo**

» Ask for examples of recent similar moves. If they don't have any, proceed with caution.



**Reliance on subcontractors for critical legs of the journey**

» More handoffs = more room for error. Confirm who's actually doing the work.



**No bonded storage or FTZ access**

» Without these options, your flexibility (and bottom line) can take a hit.



**Multiple points of contact for different stages**

» Fragmented communication leads to confusion, especially when unexpected issues arise.

**Choosing a provider for international project freight is about more than price. It's about finding a team that's built to handle complexity without letting things slip through the cracks.**





# UNLOCK FLEXIBILITY: SELECTING THE RIGHT STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS

**International project freight rarely moves in a straight line.** That's not a bad thing, so long as you have the right flexibility built into your logistics plan. The most successful importers and exporters know how to use tools like bonded storage, Foreign Trade Zones (FTZs), and transloading to reduce costs, manage uncertainty, and keep cargo flowing through key transition points.

Let's walk through each of these strategic options and their benefits.

## ***Bonded Storage: Breathing Room for Customs & Cash Flow***

When your cargo enters the U.S., the clock starts ticking on duties and customs clearance. But what if you're not ready to file paperwork or pay tariffs just yet? **Bonded storage buys you more time.**

In a bonded facility, imported freight can be stored without clearing customs or paying duties — so you can finalize documentation, align project timelines, or reroute cargo in the meantime. For exporters, bonded storage can also act as a secure holding area while awaiting vessel availability or cross-border coordination.

**Bonded storage can allow international project shippers:**



**Defer duty payments**  
until cargo is released  
into U.S. commerce



**Avoid costly customs delays**  
by pausing the clearance  
process until all documents  
and details are in place



**Create scheduling flexibility**  
when project timelines shift  
or downstream logistics  
aren't finalized

## FTZs: Strategic Financial & Operational Advantages

A Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) is a special economic area within U.S. borders where imported goods can be stored, handled, or assembled without being subject to immediate duties or customs processes. Once cargo leaves the FTZ and enters U.S. commerce, duties will be assessed — but not a moment before.

For international project shippers, FTZs offer significant advantages:



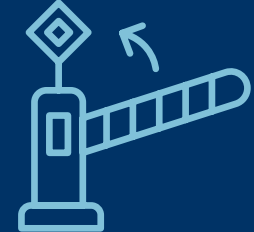
### Duty deferral or reduction:

Particularly beneficial if you're importing high-value components or re-exporting items.



### Improved lead time control:

Hold freight in a controlled environment until your project site or delivery path is ready.



**Fewer disruptions:** FTZs are often located near major ports or borders, helping you bypass congested or delayed customs zones.

## PROJECT PRO TIP

The key differences between bonded storage facilities and FTZs? **The duration of storage and your ability to manipulate the cargo while it is in holding.**

**FTZs:** Allow for goods to be manipulated — think testing, assembly, manufacturing, repackaging, repairs, etc. This flexibility is key to unlocking the decreased duty rates associated with FTZs. There is no limit on storage duration in FTZs.

**Bonded warehouses:** If they allow manipulation at all, it is far more limited in scope. Essentially, the goods must remain in their original state until duties are paid and they enter the domestic market or are re-exported. In the U.S., bonded warehouse storage duration is limited to five years.

## Transloading: Seamless Handoffs for Non-Standard Freight

Project freight can span oceans, highways, and rail lines. That means transloading — the process of transferring freight from one mode to another — is inevitable. **For non-containerized or breakbulk cargo, that's no simple switch-up.**

**Successful transloading requires:**



**Heavy-lift equipment** capable of safely moving large, irregular pieces



**Specialized crews** trained to re-secure, lash, and protect sensitive cargo



**Tight coordination** to avoid bottlenecks or missed connections

**A provider with integrated transloading services on-site (particularly at bonded or FTZ-equipped terminals) can significantly cut down on delays, damage risk, and drayage costs.**

## Look for Integrated In-Transit Services and Storage

When you're moving high-stakes, non-containerized freight, it's best to minimize handoffs to retain the highest degree of control over your supply chain. That's why we recommend **looking for transportation providers that offer in-transit services and storage options (like those we've just overviewed) on a single footprint.**

This kind of integrated setup limits freight handoffs, shortens dwell time, and simplifies the chain of custody, all of which reduce the risk of delay or damage during transition points.

Evaluating potential international project freight providers soon? **Look for on-terminal capabilities near key ports or borders that offer bonded warehousing, in-house transloading crews, FTZ designation, and heavy equipment on site.**

With everything managed under one roof from customs clearance to heavy-lift transfers, you'll gain clearer communication, faster response times, and a direct line to the people responsible for your freight's care.

# TERMINAL LOCATIONS: WHY GEOGRAPHY STILL MATTERS

Digital platforms, ecommerce-driven markets, and global networks may have transformed how freight is booked, tracked, and managed.

But when it comes to moving project freight across borders or onto job sites, **location still matters.**

## *A lot.*

For project freight, proximity to ports, terminals, and border crossings directly affects your ability to move quickly, minimize risk, and stay on budget.

That's because even the most sophisticated logistics plan can fall apart if your cargo is stuck miles from where it needs to clear customs, transload, or reroute.

In project freight, operational efficiency and strategy must go hand in hand. When your provider operates near key entry and exit points, you benefit from:

- » **Faster customs clearance:** Local relationships and on-the-ground teams speed up documentation handoffs and inspections.
- » **Fewer drayage legs:** The shorter the distance between port and terminal, the lower your transport costs — and the less exposure you have to port congestion or capacity shortages.
- » **Reduced demurrage and detention fees:** The quicker your cargo transitions to a secure facility, the less time it sits idle while costs accumulate.



## *How Terminal Locations Can Shape Your Freight Strategy*

Not all access points are created equal. Your provider can have all the expertise in the world, but if their locations don't make sense for international project freight, **you may as well have no provider at all.**

To help illustrate the impact of geography on the ease and efficiency of your project freight moves, let's use ATS International's three terminal locations as examples:

### **Yuma/San Luis, AZ**

For shippers moving cross-border or nearshoring freight in and out of Mexico, it's hard to ask for a better location than San Luis.



Sitting directly on the U.S.-Mexico border, a terminal near San Luis's Ports of Entry helps shippers avoid the heavy congestion typical of larger entry points (like Laredo or Otay Mesa) and enjoy quicker customs processing.

The city's connection to major transportation corridors and its role in supporting agricultural and retail industries further enhance its appeal for project freight activities.

Conveniently situated near Interstates 8 and 10, the San Luis terminal is easily reachable for over-the-road (OTR) transportation. This enables a smoother transfer from terminal to transport and transport to terminal.

## **Houston/Channelview, TX**

They say everything is bigger in Texas, and that includes the freight: Houston is a Gulf Coast powerhouse for oversize and industrial cargo.

Channelview (which is located where the San Jacinto River forms Old River) is well-positioned near the Port of Houston and inland transport corridors.

This location is particularly advantageous for project shippers transporting energy, manufacturing, and heavy equipment freight, though all cargo types move through this point.

The Port of Houston boasts a well-maintained and expansive infrastructure, including deep-water channels and multimodal connections, which facilitates the seamless movement of heavy cargo.

Like San Luis, Channelview is close to several major highways (Interstates 10, 45, and 69) that make it easily accessible to OTR trucks, which can reduce drayage miles and potential fees for shippers.

## **Jacksonville, FL**

Fast, flexible deployment inland or overseas is made easy in Jacksonville, a growing Atlantic hub for international project freight with strong connections to Caribbean and South American markets.

One of the [10 busiest ports in the nation](#), the Port of Jacksonville's deepwater shipping channel, two-way river traffic, and strong intermodal connections support more efficient and cost-effective cargo handling and transportation.

As such, Jacksonville's location is ideal for shippers that need a perfect balance between port access and surface infrastructure.

With air, sea, and rail modalities all close at hand, Jacksonville is the whole package — especially when you factor in its enviable position at the heart of several key roadways.

Interstate 10 begins in Jacksonville and stretches all the way to California (passing through or near San Luis and Channelview on its way); it also provides quick access to Interstate 75, which stretches north through America's heartland.

Meanwhile, Interstate 95 runs through Jacksonville and along the entire east coast, while U.S. Routes 301, 1, 17, and 90 deliver excellent access to the nation's roadway infrastructure.



## Regional Agility = Risk Reduction

A labor strike at a major port. A tariff increase on goods entering from a specific region. A backlog of vessels waiting for berth after a weather delay.

These aren't hypotheticals — they're recurring realities for today's importers and exporters. **That's where regional agility becomes your safety net.**

When your freight provider has a network of strategically located terminals — near multiple ports, border crossings, and inland hubs — **you're not locked into a single point of failure.**

If congestion shuts down one route, you can reroute through another. If a new regulation suddenly makes your preferred entry point more expensive or time-consuming, you can pivot without overhauling your entire plan.

**Regional flexibility is especially critical for project freight, where delays or cost overruns can derail entire job timelines or strain contractual obligations.**

A provider with strong regional coverage and integrated infrastructure can shift modes, adjust schedules, and respond to disruption without sacrificing visibility or control.

**In a landscape where logistics variables are constantly evolving, staying nimble is key.**

By carefully choosing transportation providers that have the network necessary to flex to Plan B (or even C) without breaking a sweat, you can effectively future-proof your supply chain for whatever the market, government, or Mother Nature throws your way.







# FINAL THOUGHTS: WHAT PROJECT FREIGHT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

The truth is, project freight transportation will never be simple. These moves are inherently more complex than standard shipments, and therefore require more expertise to pull off successfully. But project freight can be more predictable, less stressful, and far easier to manage — so what's the secret?

**Your success isn't about avoiding every challenge — it's about being prepared for them.**

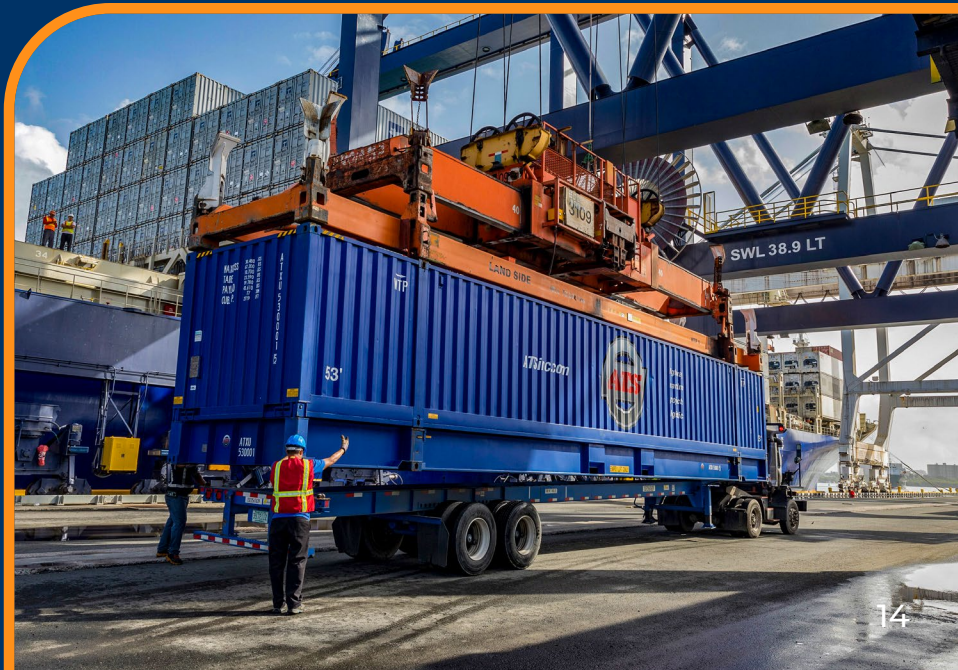
In project logistics, an ounce of preparation is worth a ton (several tons) of damage control. As a shipper, you can set yourself up for success by:

- 1 Knowing your cargo inside and out, including what makes it uniquely complex
- 2 Rigorously vetting providers to select ones with proven project capabilities, experience, and strategically-located terminals
- 3 Working with your provider to determine which value-added services will deliver the biggest strategic edge

**Of those steps, your choice of provider is easily the most critical to your success.**

Whether you're moving turbines across the Gulf, construction equipment into South America, or oversized components across the U.S.–Mexico border, the stakes are high. Tariffs change. Terminals get congested. Weather disrupts schedules. And when those variables hit, it's not the size of your freight that determines success — it's the strength of your plan and the quality of your logistics provider.

So when you work with a provider that understands the stakes of international project freight and manages the entire move with precision, you may notice that things change for the better. Customs documentation is accurate and timely. Permits and escorts are pre-arranged, not last-minute scrambles. Cargo transitions seamlessly between vessel, crane, yard, and truck.



Most importantly, your team doesn't have to lose precious time and resources fighting fires. Instead, you have the bandwidth to plan ahead, stay aligned with your broader project schedule, and avoid the ripple effects that delays and surprise costs can create.

If you've read this far, you know what to look for. A strong international project freight provider:

- ✓ Offers **end-to-end service**, not just siloed segments
- ✓ Has deep experience with **breakbulk and out-of-gauge freight**
- ✓ Operates **bonded and FTZ-equipped terminals** near strategic ports and borders
- ✓ Provides **in-house transloading, heavy lift, and secure storage**
- ✓ Supports you with **clear communication and a single point of contact**



**In short, they don't just show up with a truck or a crane — they show up with a plan.**

When your provider can deliver a freight strategy that performs predictably, flexes under pressure, and keeps your operations on track, you can move your cargo with greater confidence, fewer delays, and more peace of mind. **That's what you and your critical projects deserve.**

On the next page, you'll find a printable International Project Freight Planning Worksheet your team can use to gather all the key details of your project in one place. Completing this worksheet will enable you to quickly provide your carriers with pertinent information, visualize all the moving parts of your shipments, and reclaim your control over the transportation process.

Thanks for following along with us through The Importer/Exporter's Guide to Project Shipping Success. Here's to your most efficient, stress-free projects yet!





# YOUR INTERNATIONAL PROJECT FREIGHT PLANNING WORKSHEET

Use this checklist to capture the key details, requirements, and provider capabilities for your next international project freight move.

## 1. Freight Overview

Freight Type: \_\_\_\_\_

(Breakbulk, Out-of-Gauge, Heavy Lift, etc.)

Freight Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Origin (City, Country): \_\_\_\_\_

Destination (City, Country): \_\_\_\_\_

Incoterms: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Equipment & Handling Requirements

Dimensions (L x W x H): \_\_\_\_\_

Total Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Pieces/Loads: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Handling Needs:

☐ Crane

☐ Rigging

☐ Climate Control

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Compliance & Documentation

Permits Required? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Contact/Personnel Handling Permit Acquisition: \_\_\_\_\_

Customs Documentation Prepared? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ In Progress

Contact/Personnel Handling Document Preparation: \_\_\_\_\_

Export/Import Licenses Required? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Contact/Personnel Handling Licensure: \_\_\_\_\_



## 4. Provider Capabilities Checklist

Does the provider offer the following?:

- ☐ End-to-end move management
- ☐ OOG/breakbulk expertise
- ☐ Drayage
- ☐ Bonded storage access
- ☐ FTZ access
- ☐ On-site transloading & heavy-lift capability
- ☐ OTR transportation
- ☐ Secure yards near port or border
- ☐ Customs documentation support
- ☐ Single point of contact

Notes:

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## 5. Project Timeline

Cargo Ready Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Required Delivery Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Milestones/Deadlines:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Risk & Contingency Planning

Known Bottlenecks or Concerns: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Routes or Ports Considered? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Tariff or Regulatory Watchpoints? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Internal Coordination

Project Contact / Decision Maker(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Deadline for Provider Selection: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 8. Notes & Follow-Ups

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