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5 Key Aspects of Manhattan Associates' Active TMS Platform

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Introduction

Manhattan Associates continues to advance its Active TMS platform, part of the company's broader Active Supply Chain suite encompassing transportation, warehouse, and yard management. Designed from inception as a microservices-based, evergreen SaaS solution, Manhattan's TMS reflects the company's intent to unify execution systems and minimize the friction associated with enterprise software adoption.

Based on our ongoing evaluations and recent product briefings, JBF Consulting has identified five key areas where Manhattan is differentiating its TMS offering:

1. **Unified Supply Chain Execution Platform (WMS, TMS, YMS)**
2. **Deployment Flexibility and Evergreen Architecture**
3. **AI Foundry and Agent Framework**
4. **Fleet Management Built for Real-World Operations**
5. **Market Maturity**

Each of these areas is analyzed below, followed by JBF's perspective on the platform's direction.

Area 1

UNIFIED SUPPLY CHAIN EXECUTION PLATFORM

(WMS, TMS, YMS)

JBF SENTIMENT RATING™
Strategic Value | 5 out of 5
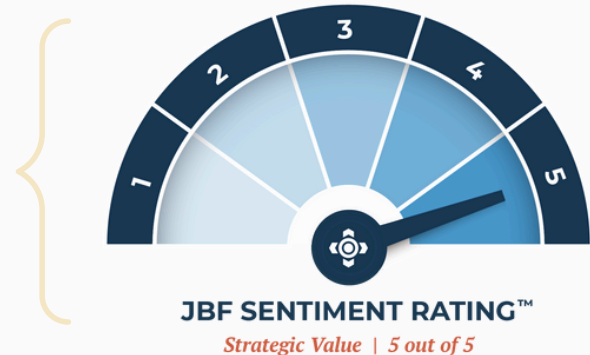
Driving Faster Time-to-Value Through Orchestrated Execution

Manhattan's Active execution platform spans transportation, warehouse, and yard management, delivering value through two key dimensions: technical unification and business-driven orchestration. Built on a shared microservices foundation, the platform uses common data objects for orders, shipments, and inventory, allowing customers who leverage multiple Manhattan solutions to operate from a single source of truth.

This architecture eliminates the need for shippers to develop and maintain complex integrations between TMS, WMS, and YMS. By removing as many as eight traditional interfaces, customers can significantly reduce IT overhead, integration risk, and long-term maintenance costs. Shared master data, such as locations, customers, and carriers, ensures consistency and reduces redundant data entry or synchronization logic across systems.

The true power of the Active platform extends beyond integration efficiency. When these systems operate on a unified platform, they share real-time operational intelligence. The TMS understands what is happening in the warehouse, the WMS reflects transportation status, and the yard system orchestrates flow based on the dynamic interaction between both. This level of visibility and synchronization allows organizations to respond to change rather than react to it, adjusting plans based on what is actually happening on the ground.

Manhattan's architecture also supports advanced orchestration scenarios, such as dynamically optimizing trailer-to-door assignments based on current warehouse capacity and inbound ETAs, or rescheduling dock appointments automatically when an inbound load is delayed. In these scenarios, the WMS can adjust labor scheduling while the TMS reroutes downstream loads or notifies carriers—automating what were once disconnected manual responses.

JBF Perspective

5 out of 5

The value of Manhattan's unified execution platform lies not only in the elimination of integration work but in what the platform enables once execution systems share real-time intelligence. For shippers managing complex, high-velocity operations, this synchronization across transportation, warehouse, and yard delivers a degree of orchestration that is difficult to achieve through integrated point solutions. We are encouraged by the progress made on unified execution use cases and believe this is an area Manhattan clients should continue to consider as an alternative to the traditional best in breed ecosystem approach.

Manhattan's vision to ultimately unify supply chain planning and execution represents the next logical step, reducing operational friction across the entire supply chain. As the Active platform matures, this convergence of functions and systems will continue to shorten time-to-value and provide a strong foundation for predictive and autonomous logistics operations.

Area 2

DEPLOYMENT FLEXIBILITY AND EVERGREEN ARCHITECTURE

JBF SENTIMENT RATING™

Strategic Value | 4 out of 5

Improving Speed and Expense, Future-Proof Scale

Manhattan has designed its platform to overcome common friction points in enterprise software adoption. The deployment model is intentionally flexible across business size, geography, and implementation approach, acknowledging the reality that not all customers need or want the same deployment path.

The platform scales effectively from small and midsize businesses through large enterprises, with pricing and feature tiers aligned to customer complexity. Its multi-geography support enables consistent deployment across global operations, while the evergreen, version-less model delivers continuous innovation every 90 days, which requires no downtime. This ensures customers remain current without the disruption of traditional upgrade cycles.

Manhattan's pay for advanced capabilities model further supports incremental adoption. Organizations can activate advanced features as their operations mature, avoiding upfront costs for functionality not yet deployed. For businesses needing SaaS flexibility with custom workflows or industry-specific extensions, the architecture is designed to be extensible, supporting business-specific customizations without compromising the integrity of the core solution.

Manhattan reinforces this deployment flexibility with a strong support and adoption framework. The company's customer success program focuses on measurable adoption outcomes, ensuring that clients realize value beyond initial go-live. Its Regression Testing as a Service offering is particularly notable, providing a practical mechanism to validate production configuration, workflow and integrations across evergreen releases. This approach reduces operational risk and enhances confidence in continuous deployment cycles, while ongoing support efforts are designed to deliver measurable value beyond basic maintenance.

JBF Perspective
4 out of 5

Enterprise applications have long been known for their unfriendly, clunky user interfaces. The TMS user interfaces are typically object-based (e.g. order screen, shipment screen, rates screen) versus workflow-based, seemingly built by engineers who never actually had to build a load or manage a rate tariff. These systems have historically required significant and costly training and, in many cases, drive end-user dissatisfaction and workarounds that compromise system and data integrity.

Manhattan's deployment flexibility effectively resolves a long-standing tension in enterprise software where organizations need solutions that meet current needs without constraining future growth. One persistent challenge in SaaS platforms is balancing standardization with customization. Enterprises want scalability, continuous updates, and lower TCO of cloud deployment but require flexibility to accommodate industry requirements, or regulatory constraints.

Manhattan's platform is extensible to provide flexibility for clients that want SaaS benefits but need to account for business nuances. This means customers can extend out-of-the-box functionality and objects without requiring source code modifications and exiting from the versionless SaaS model.

Area 3
AI FOUNDRY AND AGENT FRAMEWORK

JBF SENTIMENT RATING™
Strategic Value | 4 out of 5

Adopting, Extending, and Creating Bespoke AI Agents

Manhattan's Active platform includes a "Foundry" environment that enables customers to enable, extend, or create AI agents through natural language commands. This no-code/low-code environment allows for rapid prototyping and deployment of automation tailored to specific operational needs, giving customers the ability to embed intelligence into logistics workflows without requiring deep technical expertise.

Through Foundry, customers can extend existing agents by adding custom logic, business rules, or data sources to Manhattan's prebuilt agents. They can also create entirely new agents from scratch by describing what the agent should do in natural language, testing it in a sandbox, and promoting it to production. Agents can call external data sources to enhance operational decisions, such as rerouting shipments ahead of severe weather events using risk and weather information.

Several use cases are already in production or development. Examples include a shipment planning agent that identifies backhaul opportunities by detecting empty miles, a post-optimization analysis agent that evaluates trailer utilization and recommends improvements, and a shipment execution agent that monitors shipments in real time, flags exceptions, and triggers corrective actions.

Pilot customers have been granted early access to Foundry, allowing Manhattan to collect real-world feedback and refine the platform iteratively. The approach emphasizes usability and business enablement—placing automation development in the hands of the people closest to the operational challenges.

JBF Perspective
4 out of 5

Manhattan's approach to embedded AI—focused on low-code, domain-specific agent creation—is consistent with the broader trend toward democratized AI within enterprise applications. Foundry's no-code interface allows logistics teams to develop automation without dependence on IT or data science resources, accelerating innovation cycles. The ability to call external data sources and deploy agents that improve over time represents a practical and differentiated use of AI within transportation management.

While early results are promising, the next step will be the publication of real-world case studies that quantify value creation across operations. As the Foundry ecosystem matures and customers build reusable, domain-specific agents, the platform's AI strategy could become a key competitive advantage in the TMS market.

Area 4
FLEET MANAGEMENT

JBF SENTIMENT RATING™
Strategic Value | 5 out of 5
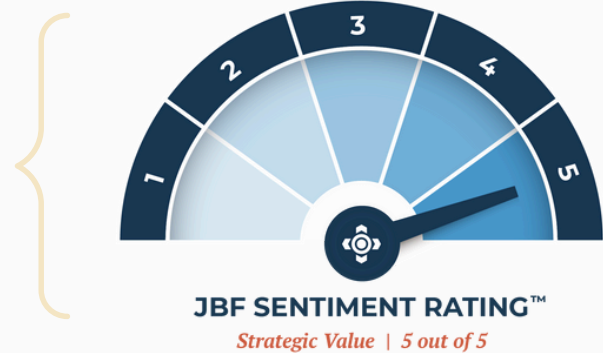
Built for Real-World Operations

Manhattan has invested in solving operational challenges for complex fleet environments, particularly in grocery and retail, where private and dedicated fleet management is both critical and common. The platform delivers capabilities for shippers managing their own or dedicated assets and supports the nuanced planning trade-offs between contract, for-hire capacity, and fleet capacity.

Manhattan's approach acknowledges that private fleets have fundamentally different cost structures than contract carriers. Representing fixed costs, driver labor, equipment utilization, and backhaul economics is what separates basic routing from true optimization. The platform supports detailed fleet costing across multiple movement types (linehaul, backhaul, relay, and shuttle), allowing shippers to model financial performance across the full range of transportation activities.

Manhattan's optimization engine supports transportation planning across common carriers and fleets, providing an efficient and effective way to balance transportation needs with fixed and dynamic capacity models. The system optimizes both linehaul and backhaul movements to reduce empty miles and improve asset utilization, a capability that is especially valuable for grocery and retail networks with frequent inbound loads and outbound store deliveries. Manhattan's optimization engine continually adjusts with real-world execution, factoring driver Hours of Service and real-time location data to prevent unrealistic assignments and maintain operational efficiency.

Additionally, the optimization engine is balancing tradeoffs between fleet and common carrier capacity. Multiple strategies can be run simultaneously, allowing the system to compare different scenarios in real time. After evaluation, the most optimal strategy can be selected for execution, ensuring that decisions are based on the best available outcomes for their specific goals and constraints without requiring the time and inefficiency of sequential runs and analysis.

While driver pay processing typically occurs in external HRIS systems, Manhattan's TMS can generate and serve pieces of the necessary data to support those workflows. Additionally, the platform natively supports acceptance and auditing of dedicated fleet invoices, an uncommon capability in the TMS market that reduces the need for manual reconciliation processes.

JBF Perspective
5 out of 5

Manhattan's fleet management capabilities demonstrate a strong understanding of operational complexity in grocery and retail. Modeling the economics of private fleet operations, re-optimization based on execution data, and integrated dedicated fleet invoice auditing reflect thoughtful investment in solving real-world challenges.

Most optimization engines in the market remain static, running the same algorithms the same way every time, not adapting to operational realities or recognizing that evaluating all feasible scenarios results in diminishing returns. Manhattan's approach to adaptive optimization is recognizing when additional scenario evaluations yield minimal incremental value is promising. The next logical step would be the introduction of probabilistic optimization methods that allow the engine to become not only faster, but smarter, as it learns from historical and real-time data.

The combination of these existing capabilities places Manhattan as one of few leaders that can support asset-intensive shippers that also leverage common carrier capacity in transportation planning and dispatching decisions.

Area 5
MARKET MATURITY

JBF SENTIMENT RATING™
Strategic Value | 3 out of 5
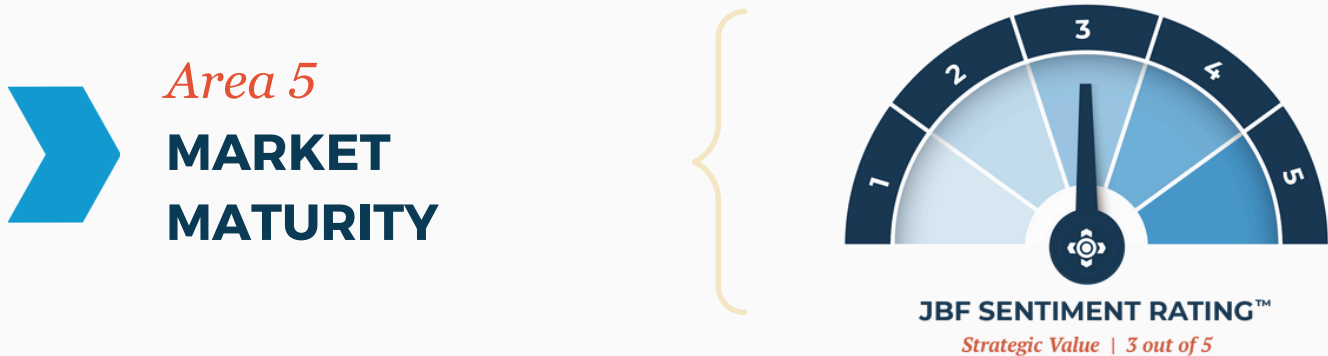
Caution: Evolution Backed by a Leader

While Manhattan's Active TMS continues to expand in capability and market presence, its relative youth in production deployment means that the number of implementation references remains limited compared to other leading TMS providers. The product, now roughly five years in market, demonstrates strong fundamentals but still reflects the realities of a growing customer base.

Certain modules, such as procurement and modeling, have yet to be migrated to the Active platform. These components remain fully usable but require manual data transfer between systems, a process that many long-time TMS users will find familiar. Manhattan has committed to modernizing these modules over time, with the goal of reducing manual effort and achieving true end-to-end unification across its transportation suite.

For early adopters, this stage of platform evolution offers both advantages and risks. Early customers often benefit from greater influence over product roadmap and closer engagement with Manhattan's product teams. Conversely, they must operate with fewer proven implementation patterns and limited referenceable success stories. Manhattan's stability as an organization mitigates some of these risks. The company remains financially strong, independently managed, and continues to invest heavily in Active TMS. With an experienced leadership team and a clear product vision, Manhattan presents minimal acquisition risk and a long-term commitment to expanding real-world functionality.

JBF Perspective
3 out of 5

Early adoption carries inherent trade-offs: greater influence and innovation opportunity balanced against a smaller base of proven deployments. For organizations comfortable in this earlier wave, Manhattan's TMS offers a modern foundation built by industry veterans and supported by sustained investment. The company's pace of development, financial strength, and commitment to solving operationally grounded problems make it a credible choice for forward-looking shippers.

That said, risk-averse buyers or those requiring a deep portfolio of industry-specific references may wish to weigh the benefits of Manhattan's modern architecture and rapid innovation against the relative size of its installed base. The trajectory is positive, but reference depth will take time to mature.

Summary

Manhattan Associates continues to position its Active TMS as a next-generation platform, emphasizing flexibility, scalability, and intelligent automation. The company's evergreen architecture, investment in private fleet capabilities, low-code AI Foundry, and unified execution layer collectively distinguish it within the enterprise TMS landscape.

While the customer base is still expanding, the platform demonstrates strong fundamentals, thoughtful design, and a strategic roadmap that aligns with unmet market needs.

Manhattan's TMS evolution reflects a deliberate approach to innovation that prioritizes real-world applicability. As adoption grows and the ecosystem matures, the platform is poised to deliver measurable operational value for shippers seeking flexibility today and future proof scalability tomorrow.

About Tara Buchler

Tara Buchler is Principal, Strategy at JBF Consulting, bringing more than 20 years of experience at the intersection of logistics operations and enterprise supply chain software. She partners with shippers to design and implement pragmatic, high-impact strategies that align business goals with advanced technology solutions. Tara's unique perspective blends vendor-side product leadership, hands-on implementation expertise, and operational insight —allowing her to provide objective advisory services rooted in real-world experience. Her background includes senior roles at e2open, BluJay Solutions, and LeanLogistics, where she helped shape TMS, visibility, and parcel execution capabilities for global shippers.

About JBF Consulting

JBF Consulting is a leading logistics strategy advisory and technology integration firm that partners with shippers to transform their logistics and supply chain execution operations. We empower clients to achieve operational efficiency and scalable, sustainable value through strategy development, roadmap orchestration, unbiased technology selection, expert implementation, data-driven insights, and ongoing managed services. For over two decades, our client-centric approach and alliances with best-of-breed solution providers have ensured that every strategy and solution we deliver drives measurable impact, long-term success, and customer satisfaction. For more information, visit **www.jbf-consulting.com**.

Contact JBF Consulting to discover how our team can help you modernize, mitigate risk, and drive sustainable growth through your transportation management system investment.

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