

You can Tie Down Your Loads, but... What About Your Drivers?



TruckSure

By Trevor Toohill

You can tie down your loads but you can't tie down your drivers!

A few months back I made reference to the driver shortage apparent now in most developed countries. However it is not just a shortage of drivers that should be of concern – how about the churning of experienced drivers from one company to another!

Being in the transport insurance business TruckSure has a vested interest in dealing with trucking companies retaining experienced and safe drivers.

From our perspective an investment made by a transport company in a good driver is one of the fundamentals in ensuring that the company maintains a competitive insurance premium.

Stability in your driver workforce has massive benefits. Retaining quality drivers not only has an effect on possible accidents and reduced insurance claims, but runs down through the entire operation.

Savings are very likely in the areas of fuel, tyres, wear and tear, recruitment and also many other aspects including staff morale, and of course training, and your most valuable asset – your time.

Training is one of the cornerstones of retention and yet there is a general reluctance for trucking companies to invest too much time and money into training.

A comment was made to us only last week by a large operator who effectively said it is a waste of time and money to put any effort into training as the driver will most likely jump ship anyway and all that investment is down the drain.

But it is a vicious circle anyway if you don't.

Perhaps with a little planning and the institution of a culture adjustment within the organisation you might be able to keep the good ones feeling secure and at the same time to get the training you give them returning a dividend.

Here is an acronym for you to consider "L.E.I.S.U.R.E."

L. Listen. Drivers do not often get asked for their input. Generally they want to offer suggestions on ways to assist the company. This could be anything from improving customer service to suggesting efficiencies. It costs nothing to listen and the benefits go way beyond picking up a good idea – you get a team player.

E. Explain. Want to retain? Explain. Why the company's trucks are speed limited. What is the real cost of having an accident – down time, excess, loss of insurance bonus, and customer dissatisfaction. How excessive idling and speed affects fuel

consumption and the bottom line. Why safety and compliance are more than just words.

I. Inform. As you roll out new policies and procedures keep your drivers in the loop. Let them know that they're not out there on their own just driving from A to B and that they are part of a team that includes managers, maintenance, admin, sales, dispatchers, and others.

S. Share. Share corporate and personal news with your drivers. New trucks, new or planned depot locations, new accounts, and new employees are as important to your drivers as they are to you.

Don't just restrict it to business – treat your drivers as a part of your "family".

U. Understand. Empathise and keep your promises. Ninety percent of transport company owners have started out driving a truck. It is not hard at all to remember what it was like and to put yourself in their shoes.

Understand the importance of keeping your promises. Want to lose a good driver? Don't keep your word.

R. Reward and respect. Every time you get a million kilometre safe driver let them know they're appreciated. Put "safe driver" stickers on their truck. Post their pictures up in company office lobbies, and lunch rooms. Send press releases to media outlets and local newspapers. Believe me, it is that important!

E. Excite and motivate. It does not cost a fortune to throw together the odd competition, typically for economy, safe driving and low maintenance. The benefit of staff BBQ's and social events, truck shows and the Xmas shout all pay dividends.

And of course nothing motivates more at the end of the day than being rewarded with a decent and competitive hourly pay rate!

Recruitment managers have a choice: support the driver shortages and recruit 24/7, or work to retain drivers they've already screened, hired, trained and kept satisfied – it's a no brainer really.

On a lighter note –What's the difference between a fairy tale and a truckies yarn?

The fairy tale begins with "once upon a time" and the truckies yarn - "you are never going to believe the s...t that's just happened to me!" **FTD**



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