PRODUCTIVE, HAPPY AND HEALTHY TRUCK DRIVERS

How to support your drivers, boost performance and encourage employee retention
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It’s a challenging time for the trucking industry. On one hand, the sector is performing well. In the EU alone, transport accounts for 5% of all employment and 5% of GDP, while 75% of all cargo that moves over land is transported by truck.

But there are problems too. Toll prices continue to increase, fuel prices are volatile and regulations regarding carbon dioxide emissions are becoming stricter.

Perhaps the most pressing concern of all, however, is drivers. 150,000 driving positions are now unfilled across Europe. In the US, the figure is around 60,000. And that situation will worsen in the coming years.

Many of the factors driving this trend are beyond the control of trucking companies. So, it’s crucial you recruit the best of the drivers that are available and get the fullest value from those that you do have on your team.

This eBook offers insight into how to get the best from your drivers, looking at recruitment, retention, training and improvement. And it highlights how, in many cases, technology is key for achieving this.
FINDING AND KEEPING TOP QUALITY DRIVERS
Nobody in the transport industry needs to be told it’s getting harder to recruit and retain good drivers. But the sheer extent of the issue is worth underlining.

The International Road Transport Union recently published country-by-country statistics on this issue. Included in the findings:

Alongside the problem of recruitment, there is also the problem of retainment: keeping hold of the qualified drivers you already have. Drivers leaving the industry before retirement age or leaving for another company can heavily impact operators, with significant costs caused by termination, recruitment, training and logistics.

**THE ISSUE**

- **Germany**
  - 40% of truck drivers will retire in the next 10-15 years
  - 47 years
    - Average age of a truck driver
  - 150,000
    - Shortfall of drivers by 2034

- **United Kingdom**
  - 35,000
    - Active drivers expected to retire by 2021
  - 45,000 – 52,000
    - Current shortfall of drivers

- **USA**
  - 1 million
    - New drivers will need to be hired between now and 2034 to cover demand

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THE CHALLENGES

AGING OUT
Around 30% of truck drivers worldwide are over 50. As this group retires, there is not enough qualified younger drivers that want to replace them.

AN IMAGE PROBLEM
Many young job seekers are concerned it will be difficult to maintain a healthy lifestyle and family situation while driving long distance for a living.

PAY, COSTS AND PROGRESSION
Young job seekers also see truck driving as being a relatively low paid job that requires costly qualifications to enter (in some countries) and offers little possibility for advancement once you begin.

NOT A JOB FOR EVERYBODY
In the UK, 99% of truckers are male. This turns off many female job seekers who might otherwise consider this career path.

NOT ENOUGH TRAINING OR LEARNING
A recent report from the UK’s Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme highlighted some reasons drivers give for leaving their employer. Amongst them, a lack of training opportunities and little chance of personal or professional development were cited.

FACILITIES NOT UP TO SCRATCH
In another study on the same topic, the FTA spoke to 412 drivers. One of the factors they cited for wanting to leave the industry was the poor roadside facilities that make their jobs more stressful, less comfortable and more physically demanding.
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

IMPROVE THE PACKAGE
Operators spending more money will not solve the driver shortage on its own. After all, driver salaries already represent about 30-40% of a company’s operating costs on average. However, it may be worth reviewing the terms of employment you offer both new recruits and existing staff. Do you have room to offer a more rewarding pension contribution, a more flexible and family-focused approach to working times (consider more holidays or days in lieu), an official programme for skills development and diversification, a clear career path for your drivers or, simply, a higher salary?

BETTER FACILITIES FOR DRIVERS
A study by the Scottish Road Haulage Modernisation Fund found that drivers over the age of 40 would be more likely to commit to a company if they ensured their vehicles were as comfortable as possible, their pension scheme was attractive and they were guaranteed job security in the role.

BUILD ENGAGEMENT
There are many possibilities for giving your drivers a greater sense that they are a valued part of your company. If you don’t have them already, consider introducing regular one-to-ones with management, a mentoring system that pairs newer team members with more senior drivers for guidance and an official feedback loop for drivers to give suggestions to the company about how working conditions could be improved.

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TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

As we saw above, a recurring complaint amongst drivers is a sense that they aren’t improving or developing and that they don’t feel a sense of career development. So, introducing a system for driver improvement, regular driver training and performance evaluation is crucial to keeping your team engaged. Also, for larger operators, you could consider offering drivers the possibility of training in other positions in your company, such as sales, logistical planning, fleet management or warehouse operations, giving them more of a sense that they are building a long-term career.

IMPROVING DRIVER WELL-BEING

Of course, there’s only so much you can do to manage your drivers’ lifestyles and transport companies are not responsible for the choices their employees make. But, given the need to both attract and retain qualified people, helping drivers stay fit, happy and focused is clearly in the interest of trucking companies. This issue is looked at in greater detail in Section Two: Fitness, Well Being and Mental Health.
BETTER DRIVER DEVELOPMENT, IMPROVEMENT AND GOAL SETTING

Vehicle telematics and fleet management solutions can help to deliver more focussed and effective training and improvement programmes. With accurate visibility over how your drivers are using your vehicles, you can focus on things like speeding, harsh braking and idling to identify where each driver needs to train and then track their progress as they improve towards their goals. We’ll look closer at how driver data can be used to improve driving performance in Section Three: Improving Driving Performance Using Driver Data.

DIGITISATION MAKES THE JOB SIMPLER

Digital solutions can help transport companies automate many of the tasks related to driving. This takes some of the pressure off the driver’s shoulders and lets them focus on their core job. For example, in-cab devices make communication between the driver and the office clearer and easier, traffic updates can warn them before they get stuck in a jam and automation of admin tasks decreases the need for distracting paperwork.
ENHANCED TRAINING SIMULATORS

Many trucking companies already use ultra-realistic simulators as part of their driver training, to save costs, protect the driver and maintain their vehicles. However, some commentators suggest a greater investment in this technology could make the sector more attractive to younger recruits. Writing in Logistics Viewpoints, Dan Clark, Founder of Kuebix Freight Intelligence, suggests that introducing more disruptive technologies like VR and AR throughout the recruitment and training process will help bring on the image change the industry needs, recasting transport companies as tech-savvy and advanced in the eyes of young job seekers.10

THE DRIVERLESS TRUCK SOLUTION?

In a recent Webfleet Solutions study, 38% of transport fleet decision makers predicted self-driving trucks would reach mass adoption within the next decade. A further 34% predicted this would happen in the next 11-20 years. Tellingly, only 10% thought it would never happen at all.11 This could create a situation where the driver would only have to handle tasks like navigating, driving in built up areas and unloading the truck, with all other elements automated. Overall, that could make the position less stressful and, therefore, a more attractive proposition for new job seekers.
FITNESS, WELL-BEING AND MENTAL HEALTH
While it’s easy to monitor speeding, fuel and braking with a telematics system, it’s not so easy to track stress, fatigue and fitness. Yet these factors have a big impact on driving performance and safety. Truck driving is physically demanding work. Your team use dexterity, hand eye co-ordination and stamina to get the job done. And yet, the well-being of drivers is often seen as secondary. The following statistics regarding diet, lifestyle and health show why this is a problem.

- **2x**
  A mildly dehydrated driver will make twice as many errors.\(^\text{12}\)

- **27%**
  of drivers drink just 5-6 cups of water per day and 19% drink 4-5. The medically recommended minimum is 8.\(^\text{12}\)

- **20%**
  of accidents on major roadways are sleep related and 40% of sleep-related accidents involve commercial vehicles.\(^\text{14}\)

- **26%**
  of truckers report feeling depressed and 14% report feeling anxiety.\(^\text{13}\)

- **1 in 10**
  people who drive a vehicle for work purposes admit they’ve fallen asleep behind the wheel.\(^\text{14}\)

- **60%**
  of professional drivers in the UK eat and drink the majority of their food in their vehicles and 56% consider themselves overweight.\(^\text{12}\)

- **10%**
  of drivers say they’ve quit a job because of stress and 25% say they have considered it.\(^\text{13}\)

- **Truckers**
  in the US are significantly more likely to suffer from obesity and diabetes than the national average.\(^\text{13}\)

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**THE ISSUE**

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THE CHALLENGES

THE NATURE OF THE JOB
Though trucking is physically demanding, it doesn’t involve much physical movement. Spending so much time in a seated position and a cramped environment can lead to back and neck pain and encourage weight gain.

DIFFICULTY OF MONITORING DRIVER HABITS
Drivers spend most of their working time alone, far away from the central office. So, even the most careful employer cannot monitor all of the choices drivers are making.

LACK OF HEALTHY OPTIONS
The food and drink options available to the average trucker are limited. It isn’t always possible for them to eat a healthy sit-down meal three times per day.

A ONE-MAN JOB
Your driver does most of their work alone. What’s more, the stress of operating a huge vehicle for long hours on busy roads where a slip of concentration can mean disaster shouldn’t be underestimated. Overall, this creates a pressurised work environment.

DRIVER HEALTH SEEN AS SEPARATE FROM COMPANY PERFORMANCE
As FORS put it in their recent report on driver management, “Employers often prioritise organisational aims, such as profits and business development over wellbeing, which is seen as a separate and distinct ‘add on’ to the business.” However, in truth, drivers suffering from mental and physical health issues is negatively impacting business development, contributing to difficulties in driver recruitment and retention and lowering performance levels.
REGULAR MIND AND BODY CHECK
Some transport companies have introduced a voluntary health check for all their drivers. This helps identify signs of issues common in the role, including high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, stress and depression. You can then encourage drivers who are at risk to take specific action to improve their condition, including, in extreme cases, a temporary break from work.

HEALTHY INITIATIVES AND BENEFITS
Consider adding a nutrition workshop to your initiation schedule, offering a free or discounted gym membership to new employees and creating a company sports team to encourage healthier behaviour.

HYDRATION, FOOD AND DRINK
Encourage drivers to eat their meals outside their cab, ideally sitting down at a table, with enough time to properly digest their food before they start work again. Skipping meals to get on the road quicker, particularly breakfast, should be strictly discouraged - the initial time saved will not be worth the dangerous energy crash that comes when their body runs out of fuel later in the day. For similar reasons, sugary snacks that give a short-term energy boost followed by a long crash should be avoided entirely while working. Apples, walnuts, dark chocolate and wholegrain crackers with cheese are much better options that have been shown to keep drivers alert for longer.
A CLEANER AND MORE COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT
Small things can make life a lot easier. Items like driving gloves, a noise cancelling phone headset, a portable vacuum cleaner, hand sanitiser and basic grooming tools will all help the driver feel fresh and comfortable and make his cab feel like a less stressful place to be.

PLAN AND SCHEDULE REALISTICALLY
One good way to reduce driver stress is to plan and schedule efficiently. By setting reliable routes and manageable estimated times of arrival you can help ensure your driver doesn’t become overwhelmed by the workload.

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HOW CAN TECHNOLOGY HELP?

BETTER ROUTE PLANNING
A fleet management solution can do more than just track vehicles. It can offer regular, accurate updates on things like traffic, weather conditions, road incidents, diversions and other information that could lengthen a driver's journey and add to their workload.

SIMPLIFIED COMMUNICATION
The driver’s in-cab device can make communication with the office a much simpler and less distracting process for the driver. The PRO 8375 TRUCK, for example, offers text to speech, reading your messages aloud so the driver doesn’t need to stop to get a change of plan or vital update.

BETTER VISIBILITY OF REMAINING DRIVING TIMES
By automating the recording of your drivers’ working times, you can get a clear view of how long each of your team has left in their day. This will stop you from setting them tasks that are unrealistic for them to attempt in the current shift.

PROOF WHEN ANOTHER ROAD USER CAUSES AN ACCIDENT
In-vehicle cameras record when another road user causes an accident with your driver. This helps the driver stay calm on the road, knowing that if they are in a collision and it's somebody else's fault, the video will prove them right.
IMPROVING PERFORMANCE USING DRIVER DATA
We asked 1,200 transport fleet managers how they monitor driving performance and got some revealing answers.

Driver training, driver behaviour monitoring and mileage monitoring were all cited as crucial for maintaining performance levels. And all of these activities are made more efficient with real insight into driver data.

Digital fleet management solutions like WEBFLEET provide you with detailed data on driving performance. With a clear overview, you can identify who needs more training and what they need to train in.

Integrating a fleet management solution is easy. To get the most from this sort of in-depth analysis, however, some careful planning is advised.

**THE ISSUE**

How do you ensure your drivers take appropriate roads?

- Training: 50%
- Satnav with truck attributes: 57%
- Another way: 6%
- I don’t ensure drivers take appropriate roads: 12%

How do you tackle fuel wastage with regards to driving behaviour and style of driving?

- Monitoring mileage: 62%
- Training: 49%
- Other way: 5%
- I don’t tackle fuel wastage: 11%

How do you ensure drivers are driving safely?

- Driving behaviour monitoring: 48%
- Driver training: 62%
- Manager training 1-2-1 sessions: 22%
- Other way: 3%
- I don’t ensure drivers are driving safely: 11%
THE CHALLENGES

DRIVER DISTRUST
When new technology is introduced, it’s normal for drivers, particularly more experienced drivers, to be resistant. If they are not used to it, having their speed, fuel usage and driving style recorded can feel like an intrusion and even an insult.

NOT GETTING EVERYTHING YOU CAN FROM YOUR SOLUTION
Many transport companies install fleet management solutions but only use them to track vehicles. They never use the functionalities these platforms have to record, manage and utilise valuable vehicle and driver data. As well as being a missed opportunity, this is also a serious waste of resources.

NO GOALS OR STRUCTURE TO THE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME
To get results, you need goals. It’s not enough to just be aware of how your drivers are performing. It’s just as important to know how you want them to develop and when. Setting out with either unclear or unrealistic goals will make it impossible to measure true success.
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

To help you get the full value from a fleet management solution, here’s a seven-step plan for implementing a programme like this in your company.

1. **STEP ONE: ANALYSE CURRENT PERFORMANCE**
   Once you have access to your drivers’ data, do a thorough examination. Take a look at how they’re performing, both individually and as a team. This will give you an understanding of your starting point.

2. **STEP TWO: SET TARGETS**
   Now you know where you are, it’s time to choose your destination. Set the minimum standards of fuel consumption, speeding, harsh steering, sudden braking, revving and idling you wish to achieve and set a date for when you want those standards met across your entire workforce.

3. **STEP THREE: TALK TO YOUR DECISION MAKERS**
   You want to be certain that the whole company is with you on reaching and maintaining these targets. Start at the top: show your senior management how these improvements will help cut fuel costs, decrease the risk of penalties and lower maintenance costs.

4. **STEP FOUR: TALK TO YOUR DRIVERS**
   It’s just as important to get your drivers on board. You need to establish that this is not a system for spying on them, catching them when they disobey the rules or controlling their every move. Rather, it is about giving them the support they need to make fewer errors on the road, improving their safety and reducing their stress levels.
   
   It’s worth identifying drivers who you feel would be advocates of the scheme – ambitious team members who have shown a particular interest in reaching their full potential. You’ll always have a few drivers who are reluctant to change from the way things were done in the past. Having some advocates on the team can be invaluable in changing this mood.

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STEP FIVE: OFFER SOME REWARDS
Sometimes recognition of their improvement and competition with their workmates can be enough to encourage drivers to invest in this type of programme. However, you might want to solidify that investment with some more obvious incentives. Extra holidays, extra cash, vouchers and vehicle upgrades are just a few of the potential ways you can ensure your drivers feel this improvement is worth their while.

STEP SIX: SHARE THE RESULTS
Clear communication and feedback are going to be crucial to keeping your drivers engaged and motivated. If they think you’re not paying attention, they’ll quickly lose interest in the scheme. A weekly or monthly update on individual or team results will keep drivers proactive rather than reactive when it comes to getting better.

Depending on the sort of team you have, you may also consider creating a league table of results and displaying it for all the drivers to see. This encourages a sense of friendly competition between team members and underlines the importance of staying on target.

STEP SEVEN: IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS THE PROBLEM DRIVERS
Now that you have visibility over which of your drivers is performing below standard, you can take action. As you can see specifically which areas a driver needs to improve in, you can train them in a much more targeted way one-on-one, setting them individual goals to meet in a set period of time.

Also, in-cab devices like the PRO Driver Terminal, can offer feedback on their driving behaviour while they are on the road, giving them live alerts to notify them when they can use their car more safely or with greater fuel efficiency.

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FTA. 2015.

Skills for logistics. Scottish Road Haulage Modernisation Fund. 2014.

An aggressive, four-point plan to solve the driver shortage. Dan Clark – https://logisticsviewpoints.com/2017/10/05/plan-solve-driver-shortage/


Falling asleep at the wheel. Jim Horne – http://jimhorne.co.uk/falling-asleep-at-the-wheel/
