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Robert D. Scheper

Learn to master the art of walking away

I had another client ask me about upgrading his equipment. It's one of the most consistent questions I receive.

Upgrading equipment is a matter between your maintenance guy and your fuel cost calculations, not your accountant. The only exception is when an operator seeks help in determining the value of their trade-in. Some situations require a second, independent opinion in order to feel assured that you understand the whole picture.

When an operator is in a lease situation (or ownership) and they have very high maintenance costs, upgrading or changing equipment is a significant temptation.

Sometimes an operator can spend \$30-\$50,000 in two years or sometimes even in a year repairing his/her truck. It can become very discouraging. How do you deal logically with this problem? There are a couple of questions I ask that usually help to clarify the situation.

First, what kind of repairs are they? If they are repairs related to pollution control devices then they do not bring added value or working life to the truck. Just because \$2,500 was spent this month does not mean the system won't fail again next month. Real maintenance items such as: tires, engine overhaul, tranny, diffs etc. bring added value and working life to the truck.

If the majority of the maintenance is pollution control devices, I typically give advice to get rid of the equipment. However, if the repairs are true maintenance that has increased the value of the unit, this may/should change an operator's perspective. Maybe, if you trade it in, you just repaired a truck for someone else to benefit from? In return, if you are considering trading for another used truck, are you then getting another person's problems? Do you have the possibility of having to start your maintenance adventure all over again?

Second, what are you getting on your trade? This may/should be your accountant's job to figure out if it's not super obvious. I just overviewed a client's existing lease and compared it to a proposed new lease with another used truck. A good accountant will always figure out the interest rate the lease is charging (though they never call it interest). The lease had a net charge of 22% while any equity in the existing truck disappeared. So the client was asked to forgo 2-3 years of payments (now finally with some equity) with high





maintenance costs and start right from scratch (at 22%), with a truck that was going to get very similar fuel economy. Fortunately the client understood the true situation. At the time of writing of this article I cannot confirm what choice was made but regardless, it was made with clear and true information. Far too many transactions are made without the operator really knowing what they are signing.

The simplest of all transactions are when a truck which is owned free and clear, is traded in on a new truck, with the new truck being shown at actual market value (not artificially inflated to accommodate an artificially inflated trade-in). When trading in a truck, the operator must know what they are getting and what they are giving.

I once gave an operator the advice to negotiate with a salesman on a truck by eliminating all the technicalities first. I advised him to say: there is no trade-in, there will be financing no requirements and there will be no insurance needs of any kind. All you are purchasing is the iron. Once the final price is set, then you can see the added cost of each of the added items. If/when you finally mention you already own a truck you will find out what it is really worth. Many salesmen do not like this type of negotiating. Some even say it's lying (that may be true). However, if you don't, it's sometimes difficult to get past the salesmanship deceptions. If you are in the market to buy equipment, finding out the actual costs are critical.

Where too many operators fail is in the execution of a deal. When their

minds are made up before they sign on the line, they forgo their option of walking away. They become vulnerable to last minute pressures or hidden contract terms. If the salesman can tell an individual has already made up their mind, then too often the salesman will stretch out the negotiations or fane urgency of the sale to get as much from the operator as they can.

The key to a successful trade or upgrade of any sort is the freedom and ability to walk away at any time. If you feel too pushed or intense pressure or urgency, leave. Cool down. This is business, not personal. Often times, it's better to limp away with the little you have then to burn years of investment and effort. One of the highest costs in the business world is wasted years recuperating from one bad choice.

The devil you know is often times better than the devil you don't know. Never get your business into a state of desperation. Desperate people do desperate things. I have never seen a desperate wealthy business person... at least not wealthy for long.

Robert D Scheper operates an accounting and consulting firm in Steinbach, Manitoba. He has a Masters Degree in Business Administration and is the author of the Book "Making Your Miles Count: taxes, taxes, taxes" (now available on CD). You can find him at www.thrconsulting.ca and thrconsulting.blogspot.com or at 1-877-987-9787. You can e-mail him at: robert@thrconsulting.ca.

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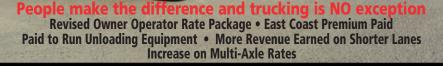
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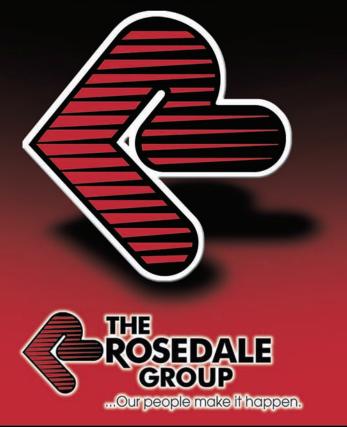
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Speaking from Experience

Ray J. Haight ray@otr.on.ca

The Power of Small Numbers

An overview of Trucking by the average Joe would look quite simple wouldn't it? You get a truck, and then you pick up someone's goods at one location and deliver them to another. If you did a good job, you picked the goods up on time and delivered them in good condition. The person or company whose goods were delivered pays you or your company, you then move on to the next job and so on and so on.

Imagine the surprise when anyone unfamiliar with this industry actually gets a look behind the scenes of this simple scenario and sees the hundreds of transactions that go into that simple move. Most folks are blown away and rightfully so. Anyone in this business, whether a small, medium or large company or even an Owner Operator for that matter, juggles countless balls at the same time while performing the simple movement of goods described above!

Drop one of those balls and poof, there goes any profit that was associated with the movement of that shipment - and maybe even worst events could unfold, depending on the nature of that ball. Right here is where a lot of trucking entrepreneurs get bogged down. With a myriad of things going on at once, they lose track of, or never bothered to track, the small numbers that can add up to big profits. They get all these large transactions happening at any given time; insurance negotiation, capital equipment expenditures, the weekly payroll, fuel payments, terminal upkeep, HR issues, repairs and scheduled maintenance and on and on and they lose sight of where the majority of their profit lurks. Here is the truth; it hides in the little details that get overlooked!

Don't get me wrong. The owners need to be good at all the things that are basic to the company and those things need to be in line with the market rates or there will be problems. But it is right here where profitable operators separate themselves from those that are just getting by. During my time working as a consultant, I inevitably ended up driving home the point that it is every entrepreneur's job, on a daily basis, to focus on either increasing revenue or minimizing expense. That is the business owner's role or the President or whoever is in charge of that business. It is a straightforward mantra and it makes perfect sense. Ouite often that little bit of wisdom starts some serious reflection. Especially if I was to then ask a followup question, which I always do, such as, "How is your business doing at this time?" and another favorite of mine is to ask. "Tell me what your cost per mile of fuel is for the last month?"

In truth this was a favorite question of mine when, as the President of a goodsized carrier, I would be cornered by one of our Owner Operators asking when was the company going to increase the rates because the Owner Operator in



question wasn't making enough money? This would happen a couple times a month, not because we weren't paying a decent rate but because these Owner Operators weren't paying attention to the details of the variable expenses within their businesses. So I always asked this simple question. "What is your cost of fuel on a per mile basis?"

I can tell you this. Ninety percent of the time I would get one of two answers. Number one answer was the individual telling me what their miles per litre are. This of course is important but it has less to do with the cost of the fuel than many think. You could be getting eight miles per litre but if you are buying fuel at the wrong price or your idle time is 40% of engine run and you are continually speeding, your cost of fuel will not be in line, no way. Number two answer would be a blank stare, or they would respond with how much they paid for their last fill up, or how much fuel was deducted from their last settlement because they bought a full tank on the cut off date for settlements or some such problem that they had. Ten percent of the time I would get a hard number down to the tenth of a cent: these were the guys who knew their operating cost!

I would talk to the Owner Operators who didn't know their cost in an effort to educate them and hopefully, have them start to understand the power of small numbers. It often went like this; so you want more money from the company but you don't know what your number one variable cost is? You are a small business and you have to know this stuff! It is the power of small numbers again. A one cent per mile savings to this Owner Operator would mean roughly \$1200.00 additional dollars in profit. It would be the same for the small fleet I just finished some business with as they couldn't answer the question either, not without looking it up. Twenty trucks saving one cent a mile is an additional \$24,000.00 dollars in profit. And from what I saw with this client, there was a potential to lower that cost by at least five cents per mile. It's an easy \$120,000.00 to the bottom line. Guess what, they were also having some financial issues. Surprised?

If you are interested in reviewing the "Fuel Management Initiative" document that I left them to review, it can be found at www.stak-up.com/?post_ type=post&posts=all. Maybe there is something there your company can benefit from?

Now to take this whole thing a little further, simply run your fingers down your expense statement, and ask yourself what else is there that would likely be an area of potential savings? All those variable expenses need to be analyzed for their cost effectiveness and for their impact on the business. Are they necessary? Once again to drive the point home, the owner's role along with the rest of the team, in its simplest terms, is to focus on either increasing revenue or minimizing expense. And, always respect the power of little numbers!

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Ellen Voie President/CEO/Founder of Women In Trucking, Inc.

Industry should rethink the challenges of Trucking

As we ring in a new year, it's time to look ahead to 2015 and the positive and negative challenges we will be facing as an industry. While many of these are beyond our control (oil prices!), there are some that beg for change in both attitude and current practices.

Let's look at some top issues for 2015 and how we can end the year in a better position for 2016.

The capacity crunch is a reality. Professional drivers aren't as easy to find as they were in the distant past. What can this industry do to ease the pain? First, expand the driver pool by looking outside current demographics. Of course we need to recruit more women, but what about finding ways for immigrants to become professional drivers? Maybe this means accepting other language-speaking workers such as Spanish or French, or possibly even include sign language. (Just an idea!)

Should we consider older workers and make the job less physically demanding and more about driving than loading, cranking, thumping, chaining, or other activities that might create a physically limiting position? While we're on the subject of age, what about those ages 18 to



21 who are looking for work?

We usually think of a career as a professional driver being one that often separates a driver from his or her family for extended periods of time. Maybe we need to rethink that as well. Are there more ways to keep drivers closer to home? Maybe more of a Pony Express type operation would spread the distance between two or more drivers who could be home nightly?

What about job sharing? Could a summer worker (golf courses, water parks, boat rentals) be cross-trained to drive only during the winter months? Would carriers allow part time drivers? What about all those school bus drivers who have summers off?

Our attitudes have been a limiting factor for entry-level drivers as well. As a society, we often devalue careers in the trades. Many of us want our children to go to college instead of technical school. When will we finally understand that welders, electricians, plumbers, and skilled tradespeople have jobs that can't be easily outsourced? This holds true for professional drivers (who ARE skilled workers!). You can't operate a truck from overseas (at least not yet).

When will we start teaching our teenagers the value of blue-collar jobs that might not mean a desk job, but it will probably involve computers in some capacity? Just look at the newer trucks and check out the technology! Maybe we should consider the European model of education that directs teens into technical or academic before high school. careers Training is based on aptitude and skill and is better suited to the intended career outcome.

Moving to equipment challenges, truck cab designs will become more driver-focused and ergonomically adaptable. As more women enter the industry, the equipment will need to better accommodate a range of sizes. broader Adaptability will be important, especially for husband-wife teams. However, creating a tractor-trailer that is safer, more economical and more comfortable is the goal. Steps, seats, steering wheels, seat belts, and other parts of the cab will allow a wider range of body sizes so no one is prohibited from driving a truck due to his or her size.

One very positive effect of the capacity issue is the attention shippers are giving carriers in order to get their products delivered. Trucking companies are starting to rate their customers on dock time and driver friendliness and the "bad" ones are suffering from either higher rates or fewer carrier options. When shippers and receivers start valuing a driver's time and respecting them as individuals, we all benefit. Watch for more positive interactions at the loading dock in the future.

Perhaps the non-trucking public will finally begin to understand the importance of that eighteenwheeler on the road beside them. Instead of pointing at trucks as smoke spewing, pavementwrecking behemoths operated by overtired and over stimulated drivers, maybe they will start to understand how that gallon of milk actually gets to the store shelves.

Once the drivers, carriers, and the entire industry gain the respect of those outside of the industry (including regulators), many of our driver capacity issues will lessen. These changes won't all occur in the coming year, but we can move toward addressing these challenges in 2015 and end the year better positioned for 2016. *Ellen Voie President/CEO*

of Women In Trucking, Inc. ellen@womenintrucking.org www.womenintrucking.org



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Chris Harris Safety Dawg chris@safetydawg.com

Winter Conditions Require Safe Solutions

I was recently driving from Montreal to Toronto in less than ideal circumstances. This trip took place in December and during this trip, several times I saw snow coming off the roof of a trailer.

It is irresponsible of our industry to continually allow trailers on the roadway that cause a significant danger. I was recently reading a submission from a lawyer who had been hired to prosecute a trucking company for this type of incident. Unfortunately, falling snow and ice had resulted in the death of the car driver. The lawyer was seeking compensation for the family. It is my opinion that the family deserves compensation. They have lost a loved one and it was our industry's fault. I am asking readers for solutions to a difficult situation and of course the reason I'm asking for solutions is because I cannot come up with any on my own. We live in Canada and in the winter, Canada produces snow and ice which have long been enemies of the trucking industry. But the situation I'm trying to address exists only when the ice is on the trailer tops. How do we find a solution to this issue that only happens 3 to 4 months of the year? Whose responsibility is it to clear the snow?

This is a tough question to answer. I can assure you of one thing though. Charges have been laid against truck drivers and companies for having objects fall from their vehicles. In many jurisdictions they have written specific laws regarding snow on the roof of trailers. If you're in a province that does not have a specific law in this regard, you can still be charged for causing unsafe conditions.

I know that several trucking companies have installed different snow removal devices in their yards to help alleviate the situation. What should our industry do about those thousands of snow covered trailers that are dropped at the customer's facilities? Who is removing the snow from them? How about the thousands of trailers that are in transit and the driver takes his ten hours off-duty and wakes up to find a foot of snow on the roof of this trailer? How is the driver to remove the snow when he/she may be thousands of miles from home?

This is a difficult challenge. Each company has the responsibility to provide their employees and drivers a safe working environment. To ask a driver to somehow get up on the roof of the trailer and clear off snow without providing proper and safe equipment to do so, is irresponsible.

To equip each yard where a trailer may be parked with equipment to facilitate safe snow clearing is a huge financial responsibility and cost. I don't see that happening.

In the province of New Brunswick they have provided catwalks at the facility scales so that a driver may safely remove snow from the rooftop. This is a huge help. But there may be many miles between where the trailer has been parked and the scale and thus the driver must travel on the highway in order to get to this facility. What happens to that snow? This still causes a very dangerous situation for motorists. But at least New Brunswick has done something! Most other jurisdictions do not provide any help to the drivers.

Do we wish that the government steps in and makes new regulations? Or do we the trucking industry take responsibility and try to find a way to fix this ourselves?

Drivers, remember that you are operating the vehicle and you are the one that is ultimately causing the unsafe condition for the motorist behind you if you have snow and ice on the roof of your trailer. Yow will be held responsible if you cause a collision so be careful out there.

Chris Harris Safety Dawg 905 973 7056 chris@safetydawg.com @safety_dawg (twitter)





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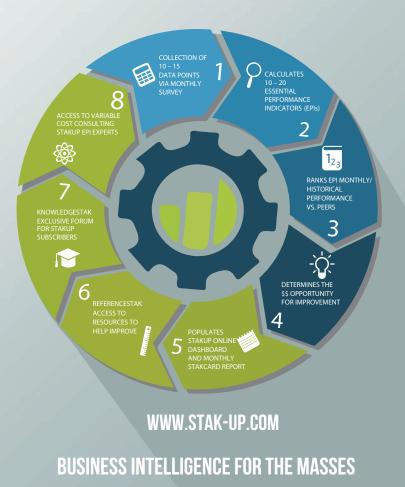
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Position: Mechanic, Truck Posting No.: 2015-03 Date Posted: January 13, 2015 Required by: A.S.A.P. Location: Mississauga, Ontario (Cardiff Rd) No. Required: 2 Department: Garage Closing Date: When filled Status: Full time - Permanent Rate of Pay: \$23.00/hour plus applicable premiums Shifts: 2 – Midnights Monday – Thursday 9:00pm – 7:30am 40 hours/week 10.5 hour day with 30 minute lunch

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Responsibilities:

- Repair, & service vehicles as directed, that meet our performance standards
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- Maintain work areas of shop to meet Health and Safety standards
- Perform service calls as required
- Maintain inventory standards
- Fleet knowledge is kept current & progressive through on the job training/learning
- Communicate issues & information etc. to ensure the Manager is kept up-to-date
- Any other duties that may be assigned

General Requirements/Qualifications:

- Certified 310T Mechanic with sound knowledge of shop practices
- Must possess a valid driver's license
- Ability to diagnose & repair mechanical/electrical problems with minimum vehicle downtime
- Must be prepared to work overtime as required.
- Exposed to fumes and grease
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If you meet the above qualification and are interested in this posting, please contact Jessica at jkapasky@canadacartage.com

Please reference the posting number. Thank you!

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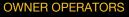
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been in Canada since 1999 and is very involved in his church and the Serbian community. Zeljko and his wife Verica drive team for us and have two children and a two-year old granddaughter who brings them such joy.

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Left: Zeljko A., Owner Operator Right: Steve Breault, President



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Trucker Buddy International



Trucker Buddy Featured in New York Times

Trucker Buddy International was recently featured in the New York Times (NYT) in an article titled, "Trucker Buddy International Makes Pen Pals of Students and Truckers."

The NYT article, written by Benjamin Preston, featured drivers K.C. Brau, who drives for Crete Carriers, and Fred Sweetwood, who drives for Walmart, along with their teachers, Caroline Walradt and Linda Carson, respectively. Below are excerpts from the article:

"This program reaches way beyond a pen and paper," said Sweetwood, who has been driving trucks for nearly 40 years and has been involved with Trucker Buddy for 11. "It paints the Rockies, the bitter cold of North Dakota and the devastation of an Oklahoma City tornado and Hurricane Katrina. It brings America to the classroom through the eyes of a truck driver."

Caroline Walradt, a second-grade teacher at Princeton Academy of the Sacred Heart, a private school in Princeton, N.J., said she had been working with Mr. Brau for about nine years.

"My students gain in many ways," she said. "First, they learn a lot about the value that truck drivers provide to us by moving goods across the country. Second, they feel they have a friend in K. C., who writes letters and sends postcards every week without fail. We have a map of the United States in the room, and we mark each state as he visits it," she said. In addition to his letters, Mr. Brau sends pictures of the places he visits so students can get a sense of the variety of places around the country. "For several months Mr. Preston and I discussed a potential article in the New York Times about Trucker Buddy and I was excited to see the final product. He interviewed each of the people in the story and was able to express the excitement I see each day at Trucker Buddy. Our Drivers and teachers care for young students and want them to excel and they use our program to expand the student's world and potential. This excellent article provides real life examples of people making a difference."

- Randy Schwartzenburg, Executive Director

Trucker Buddy International, an independent, non-profit 501(c) (3) organization, often called the number one trucking image campaign in North America, has helped educate schoolchildren and introduce educators to the trucking industry. This gives them the world through the eyes of a professional truck driver. The Trucker Buddy program helps to educate and mentor schoolchildren via a pen pal relationship between professional truck drivers and children in grades K-8 as supervised by their teachers.

After an extensive screening process, the professional truck drivers are matched with a class and as directed by the teacher, drivers share news about their travels with their class. Students write letters and send pictures to their drivers. Students' skills in reading, writing, geography, mathematics, social studies, and history are enhanced and learning is made fun.

For more information on Trucker Buddy or to make a donation to this program please visit www.truckerbuddy.org