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Let's Look at Aviation for Innovations

Although I have spent my entire career in the trucking industry, I have a passion for aviation as well. In 2008 I earned my private pilot's certificate only a few weeks before graduating from a driver-training academy with my commercial driver's license.

There are so many similarities between aviation and trucking. Both industries have a need for operators (pilots or drivers), mechanics, dispatchers and both groups are anticipating a severe shortage of personnel due to an aging demographic and regulatory changes.

According to Boeing, more than 25,000 new pilots are needed annually to fill current and future needs. The American Trucking Industry predicts a need of about 30,000 annually to fill truck seats.

Additionally, aviation's female pilot population is about six percent, which is similar to the trucking industry's percentage of female professional drivers.

For years the trucking industry has pointed to the 21-year-old age requirement for interstate transport as a reason to dismiss high school students as possible future employees. The minimum age requirement for a pilot is also 21, or 23 to transport passengers, but the flight hour

requirement often makes this difficult.

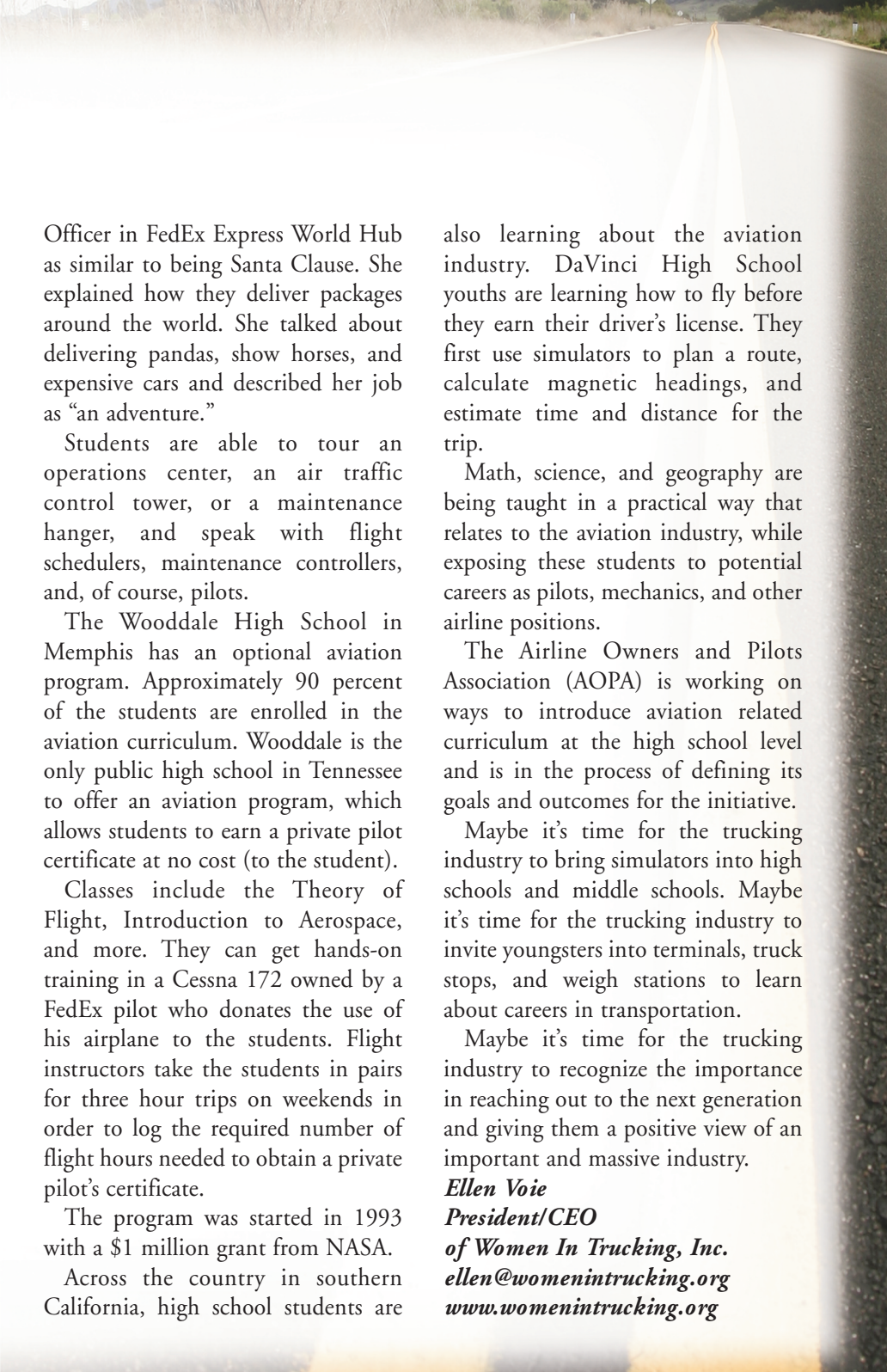
The aviation industry isn't waiting around to recruit these students any longer. I found some amazing examples of industry and public school partnerships that could, and SHOULD be adopted by the trucking industry. If not, we'll fall even further behind aviation.

In Memphis, the home of FedEx, there are more than a few ways students can learn about aviation or pursue a private pilot's license:

The Aviation Career Education (ACE) Academy in Memphis has hosted a summer academy camp for students ages 14-18. The camp isn't just focusing on flying; they expose students to jobs as mechanics, flight crews, and even administration. The youths were encouraged to sit in the cockpit of a Boeing 777 and experience flight through simulators.

Although these students weren't looking for jobs that day, their interest was piqued by learning about the opportunities the company had for all aviation related positions.

What struck me about the students' experience was the emphasis on the importance of the industry and how it related to each of them individually. One pilot compared her role as First

A photograph of a paved road stretching into the distance under a bright, clear sky. The road is flanked by green grass and trees. The perspective is from a low angle, looking down the road.

Officer in FedEx Express World Hub as similar to being Santa Clause. She explained how they deliver packages around the world. She talked about delivering pandas, show horses, and expensive cars and described her job as “an adventure.”

Students are able to tour an operations center, an air traffic control tower, or a maintenance hanger, and speak with flight schedulers, maintenance controllers, and, of course, pilots.

The Wooddale High School in Memphis has an optional aviation program. Approximately 90 percent of the students are enrolled in the aviation curriculum. Wooddale is the only public high school in Tennessee to offer an aviation program, which allows students to earn a private pilot certificate at no cost (to the student).

Classes include the Theory of Flight, Introduction to Aerospace, and more. They can get hands-on training in a Cessna 172 owned by a FedEx pilot who donates the use of his airplane to the students. Flight instructors take the students in pairs for three hour trips on weekends in order to log the required number of flight hours needed to obtain a private pilot’s certificate.

The program was started in 1993 with a \$1 million grant from NASA.

Across the country in southern California, high school students are

also learning about the aviation industry. DaVinci High School youths are learning how to fly before they earn their driver’s license. They first use simulators to plan a route, calculate magnetic headings, and estimate time and distance for the trip.

Math, science, and geography are being taught in a practical way that relates to the aviation industry, while exposing these students to potential careers as pilots, mechanics, and other airline positions.

The Airline Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is working on ways to introduce aviation related curriculum at the high school level and is in the process of defining its goals and outcomes for the initiative.

Maybe it’s time for the trucking industry to bring simulators into high schools and middle schools. Maybe it’s time for the trucking industry to invite youngsters into terminals, truck stops, and weigh stations to learn about careers in transportation.

Maybe it’s time for the trucking industry to recognize the importance in reaching out to the next generation and giving them a positive view of an important and massive industry.

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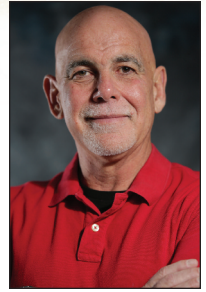
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Evaluating Different Types of Training

I recently had the opportunity to speak in person before a number of professional truck drivers and Owner Operators. It is always a privilege to address the people who keep our roads safe, day in and day out. It made me consider the importance of the “live” Saturday safety meetings where drivers gather to hear about safety & training. These weekend meetings can be very inconvenient for many of us in the transportation industry - with the advent of technology, isn't there a better way?

With online video training programs such as Infnit-i, can't online training replace the live safety meeting? This is a question that I have been asked by several of my clients as they look for ways to control their costs. The answer to that question I believe is, yes and no.

In my business as a safety consultant, I promote both online video training and live safety meetings. I am convinced that they are both beneficial when used correctly. Nothing replaces having a live speaker who is able to communicate with the drivers and to engage the audience. Not every safety consultant is able to do so but the live safety meeting, when done well and by a professional, can have a great impact on the drivers.

The advantage of the online video training programs is that they can be delivered anywhere, any time and there is a written, time and date stamped

record of completed training. Drivers can be on the road and during their downtime, receive safety training or remedial training. And a number of subjects can easily be addressed in a video format.

In the same vein, a number of subjects are best delivered in the group format. I do believe that many drivers derive benefit from both online training and live training.

With both forms of training the company needs to be diligent in selecting the training subjects and how they are to be delivered. Too often, companies rely on only one method to convey their safety programs. I believe safety issues need to be delivered in a variety of methods. Written memos are still a good way to convey a safety topic. Monthly phone calls from team leaders are also very useful as these are a one on one conversation with the drivers. Yes this takes time and effort but the rewards are worth it. Online video training should absolutely be a part of the program and as previously stated so should live safety meetings. So I have named four methods of conveying or distributing the safety messages: written, telephone, online videos and live meetings.

But all of these methods will fall by the wayside and will not have the impact desired if upper management does not believe in training or communication! Management needs

to be consistent with its message. When I use the word “consistent”, I mean that management must live by the safety message given. They should never imply by words, action or in their writings that safety can be compromised. An example of not being consistent would be something like this: a driver calls in to say that he is going to be late because he’s run out of hours to make the legal delivery on time. The response from management on the phone could be “see what you can do”. If a driver hears that, all of the safety messages that have been told and explained to the driver just got thrown into the garbage. The driver now knows that getting the load delivered on time is more important than the law which is there for everyone’s safety. That is an example of management not

being consistent and not living by their safety messages.

So although safety meetings are an extremely important form of giving out messages to the drivers, nothing is more important than the absolute backing of management. Thank you to all of the companies who use a combined safety program. By using written, phone, online video and live safety meetings you are using a variety of message forms to engage your drivers. This is only done by the best companies and the most committed safety cultures. Congratulations to those who use all four.

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Driver Shortage? What Driver Shortage?

There has been a seemingly endless array of discussion over the past decade about a driver shortage. Whether you agree there has been a shortage or not, the many doom and gloom statements coming from every direction roar on. As many know I can argue both sides of this issue, but I lean towards there not being a shortage of drivers - qualified drivers, that's a different story, but I digress. That aside I thought I would do my own quick SWOT test on the issue and here is what I see in a thousand words or less.

STRENGTHS

So let's unveil the reasons why one might want to enter this industry. I will try and be impartial but this will be somewhat slanted to my own experience - my apologies up front. The solitude for me was an attraction; don't get me wrong I enjoy interaction with friends and relatives for the most part but I am also a person who is quite content to be left on my own for extended periods of time, I'm quite fine in my own space. This industry will allow you to see almost any part of North America, so if you are interested in seeing new spaces and places this is definitely a plus. If you happen to be entrepreneurial, as I am, then trucking is definitely for you, with very few publicly traded companies for an industry that makes up a large percentage of Canada's GDP. If you like independence, I know that many will argue that technology has taken much

of this away but I still see this as a plus. Even with all of the new technology, the person behind the wheel still has to make a thousand decisions on their own each day that they are on the job.

WEAKNESSES

There is likely a variety of issues at play here, not the least of which would be that it takes guts. You have to have a certain level of self-confidence and courage to think that you can handle a truck and a fifty-three foot trailer in and around the type of traffic and congestion that is prevalent today. It's definitely not for everybody. Now add to this the elements that come with the job, to some degree an uncertain income level, certainly a fluctuating income. Let's not kid each other it's okay to good at best, but it is not excellent, not by a long shot. Very few drivers could divide their pay checks by the total number of hours spent on every element of their work week and say that it is outstanding for what they do. Add to this an uncertain workweek and irregular lifestyle and you have to enjoy solitude. You would also be entering an industry that tends to eat its young with excessively high turnover rates. As of the writing of this article no minimum training standards or finishing standards for the entry level folks. Your family life will likely be strained to say the least and the reduced lifespan of a professional driver all adds up to less than a rosy picture.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are any number of initiatives that could be enacted to create a landslide of new entry level drivers to the industry - if the industry has the courage to go after them. First would be to stop eating each other's dinner when it comes to rates. Driver's need to make more money. Why do drivers who happen to work for private fleets make substantially more money than those from the for hire industry? Think about it, because carriers bid each other down to the bare bones to get the business, if I were a shipper, knowing this, I'd let them go at it.

We need a GOOD solid entry-level minimum training standard and a good mandatory finishing standard adopted nation wide that the industry would be forced to comply with. Violation of the minimum standards put lives at risk and if I had my way, there would be mandatory jail time for violators. Think back to the wheel offs we had twenty years ago, government said mandatory 50K fine per future infraction, industry responded with mandatory certification of all wheel installers. But a school blatantly cuts corners on training and for the most part they get a slide, a slap on the wrist. Does anyone research where the individuals were trained after there is a preventable accident, NO, and this makes my blood boil.

THREATS

The biggest threat for me in attracting new drivers and keeping what we have now is our own complacency; Ontario

is being watched by the rest of Canada because of the work being done on a new entry-level driver training rule. I'm sure this group is watching our industry brothers south of the border as they craft a federal rule. It took a long time to get here; we have to do it right, no private agendas, and no short cuts. To me this is the single biggest threat out there right now, the threat of private interest who may dictate a weak rule for their own financial gain. Scares the crap out of me that we will get a watered down version of training designed to put pupils in classes and asses in seats rather than the top quality entry level drivers we need and this industry deserves.

Ontario, Canada and the US are all at critical stages in the industry's maturity, we will either move the bar up as is my hope or we will legislate another round of minutia that will not change a thing. I'm flipping a coin right now! So there you have it my SWOT test.

In conclusion, more money in the driver's pockets, better training and finishing programs and we'll be half way there. Space limits many other observations but this is a good start. Please let me know your thoughts.

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Frank Schmid



Choosing a Trucking Company: Respect is an Important Factor

In the writing of my second book I analyzed most of the “reasons” people leave one carrier for another. Though there are many stories told, they seem to all have one thing in common: disrespect. Operators and Drivers tended to use various versions of one phrase: “I (or nobody) should be treated like that”. Respect, or the lack of respect, is the primary cause of all industry turn over.

It didn't matter if the issue was: money, time off, personality clashes, routing or even cleanliness. When people perceive disrespect they will begin to build a story and find a reason to leave. It's the realization of disrespect first... then the issues. They usually “find” their story because when it comes to disrespect, they are right... NOBODY should be treated like “that”.

Carriers with low level turnover almost universally have a comprehensive culture of mutual respect (or at least predictable justness). Everyone from the janitor to the president usually demonstrates some form of respectful behavior. For those in the organization who don't, there is usually a swift enough response to correct them. Employees who dare to talk down to fellow co-workers are marginalized or even removed. The stronger the culture of mutual respect, the lower the carrier turnover.

This is not to say performance standards are lax. In fact, performance is usually higher than industry norms when carriers have high mutual respect. Respect enables trust, and a culture of trust frees up people's talents to participate, innovate and produce.

However, a culture of trust and respect doesn't just happen. There are many forces against it and every day, nearly every choice a carrier or their employee makes provides situations that could result in lack of respect. The responsibility for choice that is made ultimately lies with management. Management governs choices, therefore management determines culture.

Existing culture should never be accepted as “it is what it is” or “we will do the best with what we have”. Management (whether they like it or not) is responsible for building up or tearing down the culture of respect.

I've been asked many times, what comes first: showing respect or receiving it? The answer is always showing respect. It's an easy answer but it's probably the most difficult thing to do. Showing respect where there is none or where little respect is returned is not for the faint of heart. Carriers who conduct exit interviews are an example of those

companies attempting to promote long term respect... at least those who don't end up in a mutual shouting match.

There are still too many carrier owners who believe burning a bridge is somehow justifiable. They become too emotionally involved in situations and they make decisions based on anger and passion rather than long term judgment. They refuse to acknowledge that angry words and misdeeds get around. Anger and rejection today translates into turnover tomorrow.

This advice runs both ways of course. There are operators who have difficulty getting good carriers to accept them because they have a history of disrespect. Changing one's

behavior starts with a good dose of humility. Honest and sincere humility... not the short term fake kind. Doors are almost always open to those who hold the key of humility.

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.

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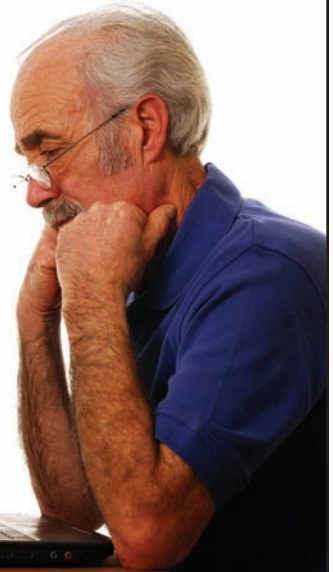
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