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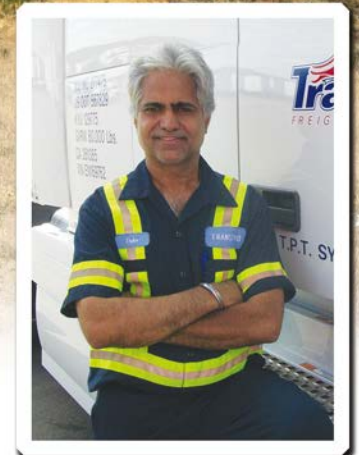
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Robert D. Scheper



Making Your Miles Count: Choosing a Trucking Company

After eight years my second book is finally off to the presses (shipping is scheduled to start September 28, 2015). It's the second book in the Making Your Miles Count series. The book contains more Canadian lease/owner operator research than any other source available today.

So, how does an operator choose a trucking company? They usually do it without adequate research. The lease/owner operator industry is just too small an industry for most accountants or consultants to spend a great deal of time or effort on. Operators love their independence and tend to trust the advice of their friends over a cup of coffee rather than spending hard earned cash on obtaining business advice. It's an understandable position; however the turnover model leaves too many operators learning by hard knocks or trial and error.

Even though the operator industry holds a disproportionate amount of professionals, they tend to be marginalized or even ignored by some carriers. This practice has its reasons. Many carriers tend to place operators as a higher risk venture than they do company T4 type drivers because losing an operator means the carrier

has to replace both a driver and a truck rather than just a driver. To minimize their risk of power loss many carriers limit their fleet's exposure to operators to a relatively small percentage (5-35%).

The research displayed in the book tracks 16 years of operator contracts (1996-2012). During this time the industry experienced some dramatic changes: de-regulation, oil prices from \$10-15 barrel to \$100+ barrel, huge fluctuations in exchange rates, and two recessions (2000/2001 and 2008/2009) just to name a few. The effect these changes had on Carrier contracts are staggering.

There is an old saying "all contracts are basically the same". This book goes about to prove that this saying is false. In fact it can be a very dangerous assumption. The difference between the top and bottom carrier in 1996 was around \$2671 per month. The difference between the top and bottom carrier in 2012 was around \$5670 per month. The details of the changes should be the understanding of every operator (or potential operator) in Canada.

There is no wonder that the operator industry has suffered such negative publicity and associated fears as

operators have had to independently weather some significant long term crisis. Many top notch operators never survived 2000/2001 or simply jumped out before it got too bad. Those who survived or came into the industry after 2001 are a different breed. On average, they do not hold the same level of loyalty and commitment to the industry that their predecessors did.

If you are an operator or someday wish to be one, this book will provide untold assistance and fuel countless debates and discussions. Educating operators was my primary goal.

I wish to thank Peter Charboneau of Over the Road Magazine for

offering his continued support to the education of lease/owner operators in Canada.

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 Series "Making Your Miles Count: taxes, taxes, taxes" (2007) and "Choosing a Trucking Company" (2015). You can find Robert and his books at www.makingyourmilescount.com or 1-877-987-9787.

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Victim or Victor?

Let's talk insurance. It's not a well-kept secret that I have had my share of dust ups with many an insurance executive. During my tenure at a couple of carriers, I witnessed many circumstances that thoroughly reinforced my staunch belief that more money can be stolen with a briefcase than a gun and that most insurance companies prove that theory. I put "most" in there because there are always exceptions in the trucking sector. Not many, but still, I need to give myself a little wiggle room.

My blood would boil when we would start negotiating our insurance renewal. After having a good year with minimal losses we would then have to listen to the insurance company suggest that, yes we have been clean, BUT odds are the big one is just around the corner and as a result, we were in line for a premium increase. Or how about this one; the total dollar amount of claims is very low but your frequency is up, SO here comes the increase.

I remember one year we were completely clean. We had no instances or reportable accidents. We were winning safety awards and working extremely hard at being the best we could be. We were proud of our year. During renewal I was expecting to have these folks eating out of our hands. That's when I was informed that we did in fact have a single claim against us. We had a car run into the side of our truck in a construction zone in the St. Louis area. The driver of the car was charged but our truck was not damaged and soon moved on after the police cleared our vehicle of

any wrong doing. The driver of the car sued us for damages. I forget the amount now but as I recall it was under \$10K. Sounds like it would be easily defendable right? The insurance company made the decision to pay the claim with no contest because the price to defend the action would have been greater than just giving the driver of the car the money. Man I lost it right there. Insurance fraud costs us all because of decisions like this. It might make financial sense in a micro situation but in the big picture, this is what propagates the ridiculous amount of fraud that exists in this world.

The sudden increase in off shore insurance captives in the trucking industry is a direct result of what I have outlined above. The opportunity to get out of the yearly fencing match with the insurance industry is very appealing to trucking companies who have had to deal with the moving target called renewal. Ingenious brokers devised a way to extricate their clients from the financial uncertainty of the typical insurance markets and let them manage their own risk and claims in a pooled fashion. For your information, much of the savings you receive when joining an off shore captive is made through reduced administration cost which is typically half what the large insurance company's cost base is.

I'm going to reveal an unguarded secret that exist for many small and medium sized carriers. I have seen this revealed on many consulting jobs and it has a dramatic effect on your renewal rate. I was

at a small carrier not to long ago and this 12-truck fleet saved \$80K by simply moving from a victim mentality to that of a valued customer mentality. During my interview with the owner I found out that he paid a rather high insurance rate and also the fact that the company had never had a claim. Moving on from there I found out that his broker has led him to believe that the insurance company he had been with for years was actually doing him a favour by even writing the business!

For the sake of brevity I will condense all the work that was done, but crucial to the savings the company enjoyed was in this case, a paradigm shift from the owner's prospective to the fact that not one, but many companies would like a crack at his company's business. We immediately started assembling an insurance submission. The company's submissions in the past were done through an insurance broker who really didn't know the industry, nor were particularly interested in their client's best interest. It consisted of a list of equipment and drivers, period.

So here's the drill. When you apply for insurance it is like your selling yourself, plain and simple, if you were an insurance company and you were receive nothing but a list of drivers and an equipment list, there isn't to much to go on as far as determining risk, is there? Now pretend it's the same company but what you receive now is a nice, neatly laid out binder, which is tabbed with the following content. Driver's List, Drivers, abstract, your onboarding process including a copy of your orientation, your safety manual, all of your policies and procedures that pertain to drivers and operations, your last five years trailing loss ratios, your detailed equipment list, (including current actual cash

values), a copy of your IFTA reports as well as your current SMS ratings and Level 11 CVOR showing your updated safety violation score. From there you round out the submission with anything else that you feel might paint your company in a better light, such as your industry association involvement, company newsletters, any social media efforts, charitable efforts, community involvement, company social events, Christmas parties, Driver awards, longevity programs etc.

Now go find a broker who knows the industry - one that has access to the available markets, one that brings more to the table than just rates. A good broker has access to information on the industry, they have safety knowledge, they can provide content for safety meetings or even conduct a meeting, and they share industry knowledge. They should also spend time doing a "mock insurance survey audit" prior to the insurers themselves visiting, which they will typically do before providing a quote. Once the insurer sets the survey, your broker should be there to support you and partner with you during this very important step. What they are not is a person you see once a year when renewal roles around, they are folks who bring value to your business.

If your not doing what I have just laid out you are playing the role of victim when you could easily be in a position of power and have some degree of control when it comes to this significant business cost. Need a good broker? Drop me a line - I know where to find a few...

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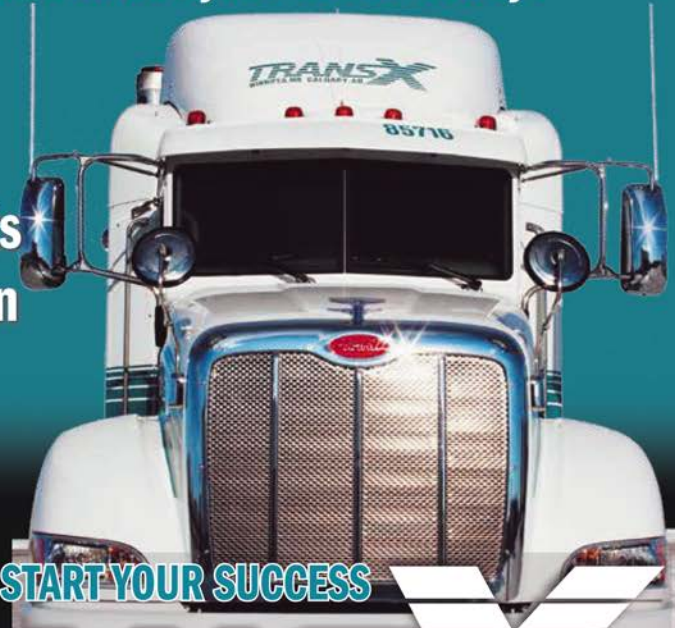
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Index

Atlantis.....	8	Fogz Logistics.....	7	Revolution Staffing.....	4
Ayr Motor Express.....	10	FTI.....	31	Road Star Trucking.....	24
Bestway Cartage.....	24	Genesis Express.....	19	Robert Scheper Article.....	14,15
Bison Transport.....	16	Go Expedited.....	28	Rosedale Group.....	23
BTC Express.....	19	Haight Consulting Group.....	28	Ryder.....	3
CANAM Drivers.....	4	Highlight Motor Freight.....	13	Service Pro Truck Lines.....	17
Carmen Transportation Group.....	34	Jack Cooper.....	30	Speaking from Experience.....	26,27
Celadon/Hyndman.....	5, 21	K-DAC Expedite.....	16	Sylvite.....	31
Challenger Motor Freight.....	11	Kelsey Trail.....	20	Tenold.....	37
Client Transport.....	4	Keypoint Carriers.....	36	Total Logistics.....	38
CNTL.....	40	Liberty Linehaul.....	34	TRANSAM Carriers.....	29
Day & Ross.....	2	Livingston.....	12	Transpro Freight Systems.....	7
Drive Logistics.....	39	Loblaw Companies Ltd.....	25	TransX Group of Companies.....	6, 33
ERB.....	15	Mill Creek Motor Freight.....	35	Trimac.....	22
Fleet Safety Council.....	32	Onfreight Logistics.....	9	TruckRight.....	18
				VeeBoards.....	4



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MTO Hearings and How to Avoid Them

I recently had the opportunity to go to 301 St. Paul St. East in St. Catharines, Ontario. For those of you who don't recognize this address, good for you! It means that you have not been to a Ministry of Transportation (MTO) "Show Cause" hearing. In fact, this past month I have been there twice. Both time I was representing trucking companies with terrible CVOR records.

At one of the meetings it was stated that less than one percent of CVOR holders make the visit to St. Catharines. Less than one percent! And here I am twice in less than a month. Does this mean that I am an awful safety consultant because my clients have to go and see the MTO? I hope not. These companies hired me to help them get in shape before they had to appear. And in both cases, improvement was made by the companies.

What is the MTO process and how did these companies get selected? In both cases, it was not a surprise that we had to go and plead our case. So how did it all work? Did they have warning signs before they got the letter to appear? Definitely!

The letter they received basically said that the Ministry has the power to shut their company down and if the company wants to avoid that, then come to the MTO and talk to them. The carrier (or their safety consultant) must then explain why the MTO should not take that action. After all, the Ministry of Transportation has the responsibility to keep Ontario roads safe and it appears (if a company gets

this letter) that the company is not doing their part!

In each of the meetings that I attended, there was a panel of three people that we appeared in front of. It is quite intimidating. They ask very direct questions so that they can understand what management is doing about safety and compliance. What is management doing to correct their CVOR and keep the roads of Ontario safe? You had better go into this meeting with a plan of action and the plan should already be implemented. They want to see action on the company's part because by the time you received the MTO letter, the need to take action should not be a surprise.

Why not a surprise? Well, the CVOR holder likely already had two previous warnings or notices that this request was going to land in the company's mailbox. The first is a "Warning Letter" from the MTO stating that the company's safety record has garnered the MTO's attention. This letter comes when your CVOR goes above 35% of the threshold. If, after getting this warning, the CVOR continues to climb, the company will likely receive a facility audit. This is the second foreshadowing of the sanction letter arriving. The results of the audit, by the way, are a great blueprint for what action the company and safety consultant should take. The audit points out most of the deficiencies in the company's safety program. It basically says: take action now and improve your CVOR score to avoid having to visit St. Catharines.

Ok, how do you avoid this process? Take action after you get the first warning letter. Don't let it get to the point that your company becomes part of that one percent that gets these letters. Many owners of smaller trucking companies are good managers; they have good dispatchers and they can keep their customers happy. But they are not knowledgeable in the safety and compliance area. Or, the owner simply doesn't have the time to take care of safety and compliance issues. So if you want to avoid the ultimate interview, then you had better hire the expertise required. This can be done by getting a knowledgeable person on staff. If you are a small company, you can probably get away with a part-time position and of course, if you are larger, then a full-time person is required. Either way, you need someone to help you.

What I have experienced is that often,

the owner will hire a consultant to train a member of their family to do the safety and compliance. In this way the knowledge and responsibility stays within the company. I believe that this is much better than hiring a safety consultant to run your safety department. Remember, you can delegate the task but never the responsibility.

So if you have received a warning letter and worse still, also received the second warning of having to do a facility audit, you had better do something positive and quickly. Take the correct steps to avoid an appearance in front of the committee! It is no fun to have your livelihood threatened.

Chris Harris

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Ellen Voie
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How you can find success before breakfast!

Author Laura Vanderkam has written numerous books about the traits of successful people. She claims the “key to making myself happy is NOT to be a perfectionist.” In fact, she has researched the traits of successful women and how much time they devote to their careers.

The author was surprised to discover that women who work an average of 35 hours per week earn about \$37,000 per year. However, the women in her study who earned in excess of six figures annually averaged 44 hours per week. That’s only a nine-hour per week difference for an almost threefold increase in salary.

She tracked these women in a typical day and found a few differences that the higher earning women had in common.

Ninety percent of them made time for daily exercise, they watched less than five hours of TV each week (compared to the national average of 34 hours), and they didn’t skimp on sleep, with an average of seven to eight hours of shut-eye each night.

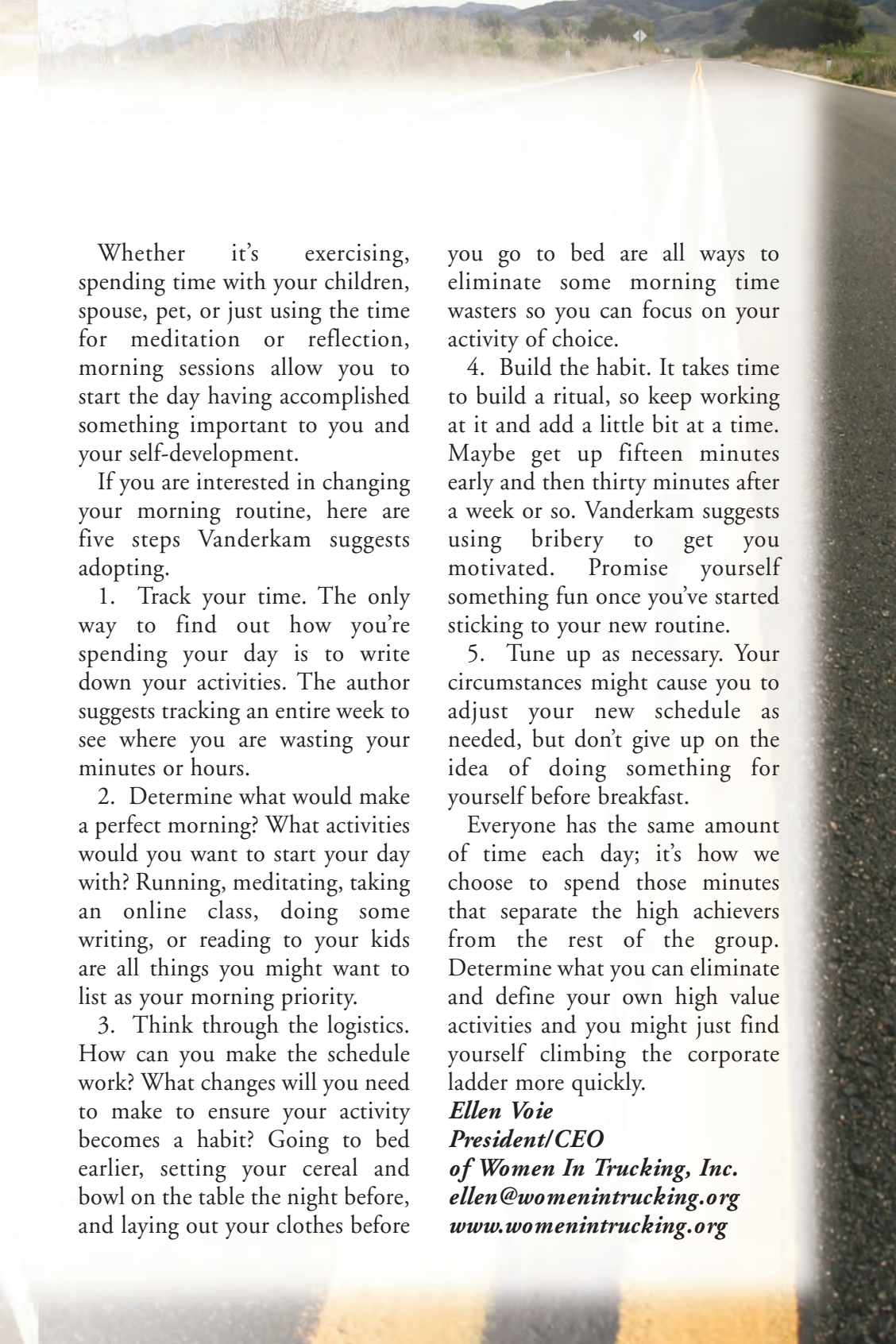
Where did these women find

time for so much sleep and keep a consistent exercise schedule on top of a 44-hour work week?

Vanderkam’s suggestion is to remind ourselves that we have choices and instead focus on what she calls, “high value activities.” In her book, “What Successful People do Before Breakfast,” the author suggests we make our routines start the minute we hop out of bed.

“If it has to happen, then it has to happen first,” Vanderkam claims. Our willpower is much stronger in the morning, so we should focus on the activities that might not get accomplished otherwise. For example, don’t schedule laundry or housecleaning, because these are duties that you can find time for later because they MUST get done.

Vanderkam suggests devoting early morning time to nurturing your career, your relationships, or yourself. Her clients keep a time log of their daily activities and look for slots that allow them to be focused and to make the activity a habit.



Whether it's exercising, spending time with your children, spouse, pet, or just using the time for meditation or reflection, morning sessions allow you to start the day having accomplished something important to you and your self-development.

If you are interested in changing your morning routine, here are five steps Vanderkam suggests adopting.

1. Track your time. The only way to find out how you're spending your day is to write down your activities. The author suggests tracking an entire week to see where you are wasting your minutes or hours.

2. Determine what would make a perfect morning? What activities would you want to start your day with? Running, meditating, taking an online class, doing some writing, or reading to your kids are all things you might want to list as your morning priority.

3. Think through the logistics. How can you make the schedule work? What changes will you need to make to ensure your activity becomes a habit? Going to bed earlier, setting your cereal and bowl on the table the night before, and laying out your clothes before

you go to bed are all ways to eliminate some morning time wasters so you can focus on your activity of choice.

4. Build the habit. It takes time to build a ritual, so keep working at it and add a little bit at a time. Maybe get up fifteen minutes early and then thirty minutes after a week or so. Vanderkam suggests using bribery to get you motivated. Promise yourself something fun once you've started sticking to your new routine.

5. Tune up as necessary. Your circumstances might cause you to adjust your new schedule as needed, but don't give up on the idea of doing something for yourself before breakfast.

Everyone has the same amount of time each day; it's how we choose to spend those minutes that separate the high achievers from the rest of the group. Determine what you can eliminate and define your own high value activities and you might just find yourself climbing the corporate ladder more quickly.

Ellen Voie
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