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1189694 Ontario Ltd. C.O.B. as Over The Road  
[www.overtheroad.ca](http://www.overtheroad.ca)

**Publisher**  
 Peter Charboneau  
[peter@otrgroup.ca](mailto:peter@otrgroup.ca)

**General Manager**  
 Ed Novoa  
[ed@otrgroup.ca](mailto:ed@otrgroup.ca)

**Director of Operations  
 & Editor-in-Chief**  
 Cathryn Charboneau  
[cathryn@otrgroup.ca](mailto:cathryn@otrgroup.ca)

**Account Executive**  
 Luke Zentil  
[luke@otrgroup.ca](mailto:luke@otrgroup.ca)

**Account Executive**  
 J.C. Arseneault  
[jc@otrgroup.ca](mailto:jc@otrgroup.ca)

**Account Executive**  
 Earle Madden  
[earle@otrgroup.ca](mailto:earle@otrgroup.ca)

**Graphic Design  
 & Advertising**  
 LKDesign  
[lennykuiper@gmail.com](mailto:lennykuiper@gmail.com)

**Controller**  
 Estela Navarrete  
[estela@otrgroup.ca](mailto:estela@otrgroup.ca)

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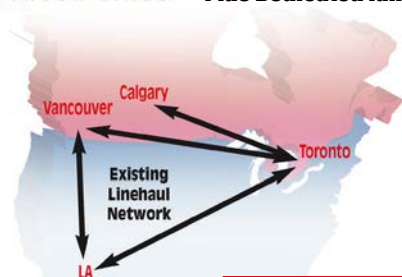
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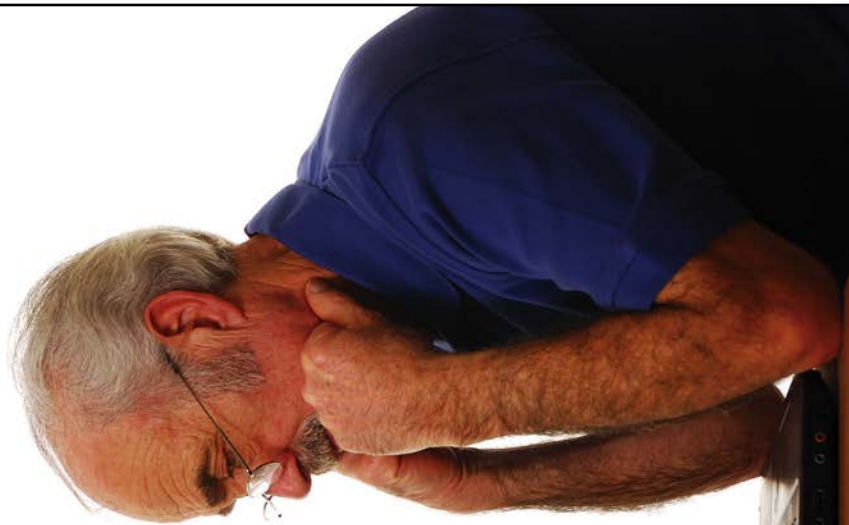


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### FTI

Dan Braatz, President of FTI got his start in trucking as a summer job. He learned the business working in an LTL Teamster operation from the ground up, paying his dues as he studied and graduated from the University of Western Ontario. He entered trucking as a career just before deregulation and worked in dispatch, then sales and then as an LTL terminal manager. He worked at JB Hunt setting up their Canadian operation until they sent him to the US for several years. While in the US he also worked for Builders Transport and Schneider National and then returned to Canada in 2003 to work for FTI.

FTI currently has 220 Owner Operators out of Dundas, Ontario and 120 Owner Operators out of Dearborn Heights, Michigan. By strategic design, they have always been a 100% Owner Operator Company. The company has a long history of operating in both countries and Dan states that not many Canadian based trucking companies are experienced at operating in both markets. "We have the normal problems of fluctuating exchange rates and both markets can ebb and flow independently of each other. The company has a strong automotive focus and serves the heavy haul world with open deck work on farm implements and steel which helps diversify the company's market

penetration," says Dan. He went on to say that the company was formed in 1928 and for the majority of its history has been a privately owned, family business. But that has recently changed. Dan explains, "Part of my job is to be aware of opportunities so when I was approached in 2013 about selling the company at a meeting in the USA, I told the person who approached me that the company had never been for sale so any proposal would have to be the right deal for all concerned. I agreed to an introductory discussion with HCI Equity Partners, a mid-cap private equity firm based out of Minneapolis, MN. After discussion, I felt the fit might work and took it to my owners/shareholders for consideration. What they saw was a company with strong management that was going to look after all FTI associates - which is exactly what the former FTI shareholders wanted so the deal got done. HCI owns 100% of the company and FTI is part of six other trucking interests that HCI has ownership in; the other five are USA based."

The buying group FTI participates in is comprised of over 2,000 power units and all the Presidents meet annually to share



Dan Braatz  
President, FTI

synergies, market applications and best practices. Everyone in the group believes that their future strength is to stay close to their customer base and to their Owner Operators. All decisions at FTI are supported with real time data – managing revenue, costs and the bottom line so that they can support every Owner Operator. “At FTI, we look at every Owner Operator’s bottom line and we host business improvement meetings to help our Owner Operators to be better business people”. Dan continued, “We need to manage safety & risk management and we tie in profit sharing. When an Owner Operator is hired, we place \$1,500.00 in a gain share account and they get it back at the end of the year if they have received no CSA points and have had an accident free year. Each year they are with us, we increase the amount by \$150.00 and currently, some of our Owner Operators are receiving \$7,500.00 per annum from this safety and longevity gain share account”.

FTI has an annual turnover of 35% (consider that in the USA the current published turnover rate is 102%) and this can be attributed to the fact that they are a 100% Owner Operator company plus their strong lease purchase program which they have always had. FTI will assist selected applicants to get into their own tractor and become an owner operator for no money down. They currently have many Owner Operators who have been with them for over 25 years and are now working on their 3<sup>rd</sup> leased purchased truck. 100% of the USA operators are currently using electronic logs and by year end, 100% of the Canadian fleet

will too. “FTI has a strong safety culture and some of FTI’s Owner Operators have chosen on their own to test forward facing cameras as they buy into and delve deeper into our shared safety culture. Technology will continue to be a major component of a strong and effective safety culture” says Dan.

FTI will continue to grow its Owner Operator and lease operator fleet. They are growing their dedicated solutions business by becoming the exclusive carrier for companies that currently use their own private fleet. This gives the private fleet the benefit of lower costs and FTI does a better job for them looking after their freight business. They are also growing their 3<sup>rd</sup> party logistics business in both Canada and the USA. They have a yard in Laredo, Texas right on the Rio Grande where freight comes in from Mexico, is sorted and forwarded. FTI plans to expand this part of their business. And they recently opened an office in Kingston, Ontario.

Dan believes the future of our industry is resilient but that it will continually surprise us, sometimes pleasantly, sometimes not. Dan lives with his wife Marjorie in London, Ontario and they have four children, ages 21 to 29. His number one hobby is playing harmonica and singing in the award winning blues band **NoBones** – he and his band mates are currently writing and producing a new album. He concludes, “I’m enthusiastic and excited about the future. I plan to remain here and hands-on with FTI!”

# thank you to those who make the miles **count**

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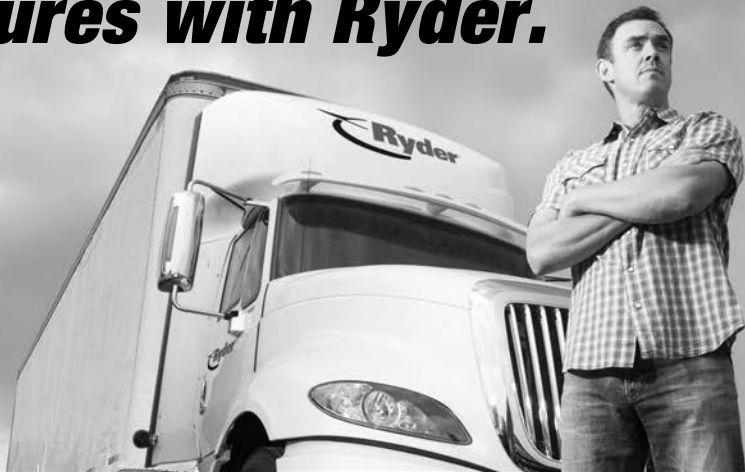
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## ***Mentoring Programs to Reduce Turnover***

For many years I have attended trucking association events and the one I attend on a regular basis is the TCA (Truckload Carriers Association) annual meeting. I haven't missed one for 26 years. Others I attend more sporadically are the OTA (Ontario Trucking Association) and ATA (American Trucking Associations') annual conventions. In this industry one could be at a different event in a different city almost weekly if one wished to. The trick is to determine which one has the greatest likelihood of yielding something of value that you can implement to the betterment of your company. I tell folks that there is a 24 to 48 hour rule regarding conferences, meaning that you need to act a.s.a.p. on any idea or material you have discovered. If nothing happens past this timeframe, you will likely find the material on the corner of your desk or in a drawer six months later and you will have a vague recollection of something that used to be a good idea. When I go to an event and invest travel and time, I ask myself when I get home if this event is something I plan on attending next time it comes - if the answer is no, I do not attend again.

On a positive note, one event that was of particular value to the motor carrier I was running was a roundtable session that I attended that was being moderated by Kevin Burch, President of Jet Express and currently the incoming ATA Chairman. TCA roundtables

are handled this way; the room is set up with the moderator standing in the middle to stimulate conversation and debate by offering up an idea or a program that they have implemented in their company.

In this instance Kevin was discussing a mentoring program that Jet Express had adopted and he was articulating how it worked and what the results were at Jet. The timing of this for me was impeccable as we were about halfway through an effort that we had taken on to drastically cut our turnover rate. We measured everything possible related to our turnover problems and through our analysis we found a number of interesting things. Most significant was that the numbers showed that if we could keep our drivers at the company for at least a year, then on average, they stayed with us for at least five years.

What this revelation did was to tell us that we needed to bring a laser focus on all things related to that time frame, without of course, losing sight of our overall turnover numbers. We stripped down our orientation; we did the same with our hiring criteria, our truck training program, our equipment introduction process and on and on right down the line. We did all these things and sure we saw some improvement, but what Kevin revealed during that round table was an 'ah ha' moment for our short term turnover effort.

I still vividly remember what happened after that round table during which, Kevin invited those that were interested to contact him at his office after the convention. He said he would share in detail what they were doing at Jet with mentoring. I don't recall exactly, but I probably called Kevin the Monday after he returned from the TCA Annual convention to start that conversation. Remember the 24 to 48 hour rule? As I recall, Kevin sent me the forms that Jet had developed for the program and the details that he had promised. What it also started was the beginning of a great friendship which I highly value to this day. Kevin Burch is an honest, decent, companionate family man. He has great conviction to this industry and will guide competently and successfully the ATA during his upcoming term as Chairman, just as he did during a successful term as TCA Chairman.

So off I go to talk to our retention action team. I articulate what I learned during my time at the convention and my subsequent discussion with Kevin and I suggested that we design a program similar to what was being used at Jet. The primary reason being, through all our efforts to curb our short-term turnover, we were stuck on about 50% while our long-term numbers were half of that.

So off the team goes to design a program. We reach out to our entire inside workforce and ask for volunteers. We then train them on the basics including the paperwork we require them to fill out. We adjust our orientation to accommodate introductions of our volunteer mentors to our new hires and we give them content for the weekly conversations they are going to have with the newbies. Items such as: asking if the company was represented

properly during the hiring and orientation processes, did they understand their first pay statement, how are they getting along with dispatch etc.?

This new program also garnered an ongoing stream of information coming back to the retention team from all our new hires through the paperwork filled out by the mentors. Just to clarify, this information is coming from a new hire and being given to a peer. These volunteers were billing clerks, mechanics and warehouse people and there was no hierarchy in the relationship between the mentor and the new driver which I believe, helped the whole program to succeed.

Succeed it did by the way. To everyone's amazement we took our short-term turnover rate from 50% to 25% within four months. This is a staggering improvement over a relatively short time frame and while it may be hard to believe, it happened and it would not have happened if not for Kevin sharing during that TCA roundtable at that convention.

What is missing from the story is the mountains of work we did to get us in the position to be successful with a program such as this. I'll get to that during later articles. Please drop me a line if you are interested in learning more on this subject.

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## *It's Time for Minimum Standards for Driver-Instructors*

Sean is a seasoned truck driver and he's very upset about the lack of standards for training driver-instructors. He works hard to do a good job and really cares about making sure new drivers are well prepared and safe to work on our roads. But he doesn't believe the industry cares as much as he does and this makes him want to talk about it. That's why he called me after he read my article in the July edition of *Over the Road*. He wanted to share his experiences and concerns.

What he told me did not really shock me since I have heard similar stories. But I was disheartened to hear that little is changing in the industry regarding training. Is it possible that some carriers still assign drivers with only three to six months experience to become the trainers of entry-level drivers? And one may wonder since Sean is so concerned with this, why doesn't he accept the challenge of becoming a driver-instructor? The answers to both questions are rooted in the fact that no standards exist. Starting to talk about training our trainers is the first step.

It may be an isolated incident and an extreme example where a carrier would assign such inexperienced drivers as trainers. But it does make us take notice of the wide gap when it comes to standards. There is no shortage of opinion regarding what would work. I can only tell you that from my years of experience,

best practices exist and they can frame a solid training program. The backbone of an ideal training program for driver-instructors includes four building blocks: knowledge instruction, practice teaching, coaching & feedback and continuous professional development.

### **Knowledge Instruction**

Many drivers are skeptical of the benefits of knowledge or theory training. They don't yet know that there is much to learn about learning. The chances are that they have mostly learned their skills by-doing. As a result they are not convinced that learning concepts in the classroom would help them to teach someone to drive a truck. That's precisely why they need a solid base of knowledge. The first thing to understand is that an adult learner will learn differently than a child or teen. Trainers will also need to identify their own learning style. It will help clarify how others learn which in turn explains why we have our own preferred teaching style. So many skills need to be understood before putting them into practice: communication, presentation skills, asking questions, using teaching aids, writing lesson plans, managing groups and difficult behaviours, assessing student performance and meeting legislative requirements. Once the knowledge portion is achieved, the driver-instructor will then have a wealth of knowledge to draw on when teaching.



## Practice Teaching

Once the trainer has the educational knowledge, it's time to put it into practice. By spending time with a seasoned driver-instructor, the new trainer will see how the skills are put into practice. This is also where personal work experiences on the road are woven into teaching. Either in the classroom or in the truck, the instructor will hone the skills needed to transmit all the knowledge and experience and help a driver become a professional. Now the new instructor starts to experience the successes of an effective trainer.

## Coaching and Feedback

Any learner wants to know "How am I doing?" The driver-instructor is no exception. It is important to provide feedback on teaching techniques and to discuss challenges which will always happen. Consistent attention to results will encourage the new instructor to keep improving.

## Continuous Professional Development

But the learning never stops. Companies need to believe that continuous learning must become part of its culture. This is where the driver-instructors will participate in regular staff development and activities; their performance is regularly monitored and evaluated and they receive formal instruction to improve. As a result, their teaching experiences will start to provide a great deal of personal satisfaction. They will see their contribution to the success of the new drivers and the company's improved safety record.

It is always a hard sell to convince carriers that training dollars are a good investment. But the benefits are tangible. It improves employee

recruitment and retention, enlarges the pool of skilled workers and their company is viewed as a place where there is advancement, opportunity and a culture of safety. Reducing employee turnover affects the bottom line. I believe all these outcomes are desirable.

And where does Sean fit into this picture? He's not unlike many experienced truck drivers who are career professionals and have a lot to share but are often reluctant to do so. I believe his reluctance to share his knowledge is based on two factors. First of all he wants to receive formal training to become a successful driver-instructor. And secondly, he wants to be paid fairly for accepting the risks and the responsibilities that come with this role. I find his requests reasonable and fair.

Even if organizations like the Professional Truck Driver Institute (PTDI) have developed standards to bridge the gap between entry-level truck driver training and solo driving; they will probably not be adopted. The driver finishing programs that are meant to be implemented with carriers, where qualified trainers prepare inexperienced drivers to drive solo, will continue to sit unused. Until there are mandated minimum standards, it will continue to be difficult to convince carriers to implement them. And only when standards exist will Sean be encouraged or compelled to become part of the solution.

## Louise Philbin

Co-founder and Education Director  
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## *Applying for Work is **STRESSFUL***

Man, I remember those days of having to apply for a job. It was so stressful! I would gather up my documents and plan what to wear, and then gather my mind and thoughts. You know the routine.

I know that it may be a little easier today with the demand for drivers. As a Commercial Driver, you pretty much have your pick of the jobs. It has been that way for years. Still, I have to believe that it is a stressful situation. After all, there is a reason that you are looking for work. You are either dissatisfied with the company that you are currently with or you are unemployed. It doesn't matter as you want a new job. You are not putting yourself through the stress of job hunting just for the fun of it. And every time you change employers, it likely costs you money. So you must have a good reason to switch.

So how can you make the job hunt less stressful? It all comes down to being prepared. There are a few things that nearly every employer is going to ask you for. You can go to their office and complete an application or in many cases you don't have to go to the companies' office, you can apply online. Either way, you still have to answer pretty much the same questions. So what do you need to be ready with?

Let's start with your employment history. Most companies will ask you for your last 3 years of

employment. You will need the name, address, phone number and contact person for each company in the last three years. You will also have to provide the employment dates, month and year. On the application form they will ask why you are leaving (or left) the company. So the 3 year history is for all drivers, newly licensed and very experienced. If you are an experienced Commercial Driver, you should be prepared to supply the same information for the last 10 years. The company is not trying to be difficult. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR's) specify that the company needs the 10 year history from all applicants. So let's be ready. Gather it ahead of time. After all, you want this job and if it is one of the really good employers, there may be competition for the placement. Show them that you are organized and ready for the challenge.

What else do you need to apply for the job?

Well, sticking with the application form, you will need a list of tickets or traffic violations for the past 3 years. And you will also need a list of any crashes for the last 3 years and the details of those. Be prepared to answer questions about the crash/crashes. The new employer will want to know.

Don't try to hide a crash or a ticket. In Canada, most of the tickets that you get find their way to your Motor Vehicle Record (MVR). If you got a ticket in the States it will show up on your PSP Report. Even violations show up on the PSP

reports. So be prepared to tell the company if it was a ticket or a violation. Again, they will want to know.

If you are not aware of what a PSP report is, it is very similar to Ontario's CVOR. It shows USA crashes for 5 years, tickets and violations during the last 3 years. It only costs \$10.00 so most employers are now getting PSP reports before you start with the company.

Of course you will also need your MVR. If you are from Ontario, add the CVOR to the list and if you are in Alberta, add the Commercial Driver Abstract to the list. For most employers, the MVR's time frame needs to be within the last 30 days. You will also need your Criminal Record Search; usually current to within 90

days is acceptable. Many companies are also looking for your FAST card.

So you can reduce the stress in applying for a new position if you prepare and arm yourself with the correct information. It makes it easy to complete the application. It makes you look organized and well prepared. It helps take the stress out of the situation.

Happy Hunting and Stay Safe!

**Chris Harris**

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## *A Female Driver's Experience*

The mission of the Women In Trucking Association is to increase the percentage of women employed in the trucking industry. While we represent all careers in transportation, much of our work focuses on the professional driver's challenges. Specifically, we look at obstacles that might keep women from considering a career in transportation.

Many carriers' representatives have bluntly stated that they don't care about the gender of their drivers'. They remark that they hire men and women and treat them equally. If that is true, then why are there twenty men to every woman behind the wheel?

Instead of ignoring the fact that men and women are physically and emotionally different, let's embrace the differences and work on making the environment better for all drivers. This means we need to look at our hiring and training practices more closely.

One carrier felt that a same gender training policy would address harassment issues by allowing women to be trained by a female trainer. Unfortunately, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) determined that the longer waiting period for women to be assigned to a

female trainer constituted discrimination. Now, women are assigned to the next available trainer regardless of gender. This means that men and women must share bunk space while out on the road. Private activities such as changing clothes, personal hygiene and other intimate routines are no longer private. This could create a very uncomfortable environment for a woman who is struggling to learn how to drive a tractor-trailer in heavy traffic, shift gears and back into tiny loading docks.

If the woman is married or has a close relationship with someone who might not understand the situation, this could create even more stress during her training.

Recently a new female recruit contacted me about her training experience at a school. She was expected to sleep in a bunk house type environment with the male students at the training facility. She was not told about this in advance. Instead, the school recruiter told her she would have lodging during her stay.

When she arrived at the school, she was shown her bunk in the sleeping quarters occupied by all men. She offered to stay in a hotel at her own cost but was told this was not an option. She left the school and



found another place that didn't expect her to sleep in a room with men. "The importance of allowing female trainees to obtain a private hotel room for themselves, even if it means paying out of pocket without reimbursement is important." She added, "If I was given this option before arriving or once I arrived, I would very likely have stayed for training and be currently employed there despite the vague description of boarding that I was given".

While I was familiar with opposite gender training while on the road, I was surprised to hear that some schools treat all of their students the same to the extent that they have to sleep in the same room. Are we really attracting women into the trucking industry with policies like these? The Women In Trucking Association Facebook page has nearly 10,000 folks who share their expertise when asked. I created a poll and asked the female drivers to respond to the following question. "Did any of you have to share sleeping space with males during training (not in the truck, but at the school or carrier's facility)?"

I was surprised to learn that ten percent of the respondents were provided a shared sleeping facility with men. Some of the drivers stated the names of their training provider. Many of these companies are members of the Women In Trucking Association.

This is truly unacceptable and could be a reason some women won't succeed as professional drivers. Even the men agreed.

A male driver commented about sharing a space with anyone because he's 'nervous (about) them stealing his belongings'. Another male driver said his wife would not have accepted the arrangement.

We have a long way to go before we've addressed the challenges women face as they consider a career as professional drivers. Personal safety and privacy while in training should be the gold standard for all drivers.

Men and women are not the same and carriers that ignore gender differences are not creating a positive environment for the demographic they are trying to attract. If you are a training facility that expects all of your students to share sleeping quarters, we ask you to consider whether this would be acceptable if that woman was your own daughter, wife, mother or sister. If not, then change it.

To learn more about the award and related events, please visit [www.womenintruck.org](http://www.womenintruck.org).

### **Ellen Voie**

President/CEO/Founder of  
Women In Trucking, Inc.  
[ellen@womenintruck.org](mailto:ellen@womenintruck.org)  
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