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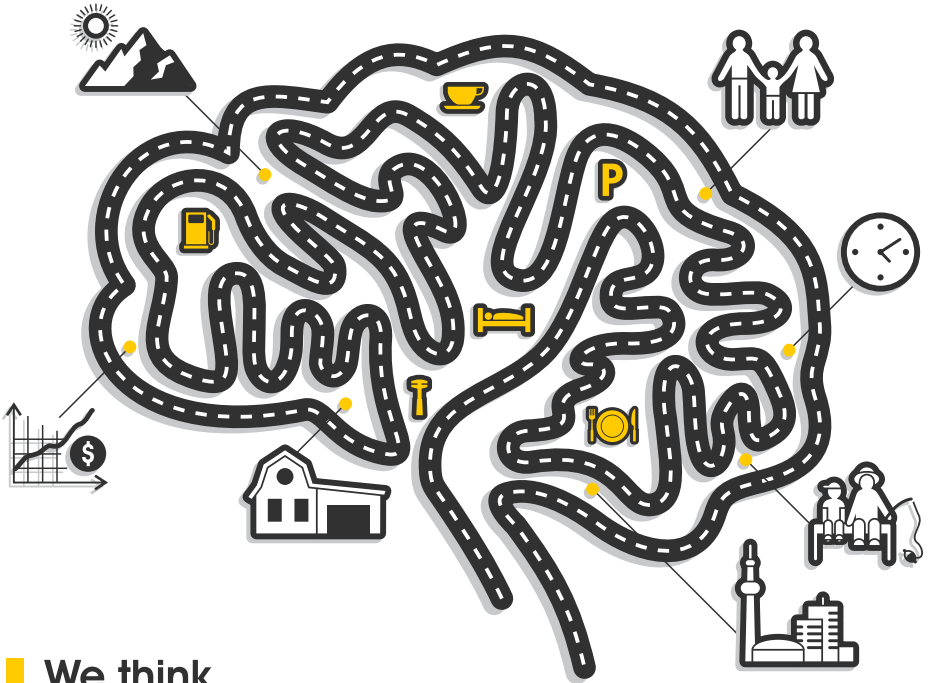
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Publisher
Peter Charboneau
peter@otrgroup.ca

General Manager
Ed Novoa
ed@otrgroup.ca

**Director of Operations
& Editor-in-Chief**
Cathryn Charboneau
cathryn@otrgroup.ca

Account Executive
Luke Zentil
luke@otrgroup.ca

Account Executive
J.C. Arseneault
jc@otrgroup.ca

Account Executive
Earle Madden
earle@otrgroup.ca

**Graphic Design
& Advertising**
LKDesign
lennykuiper@gmail.com

Controller
Estela Navarrete
estela@otrgroup.ca

BUSINESS OFFICE
18 Parkglen Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 3G9
1.800.416.8712 • 613.224.9947
Fax: 613.224.8825
Email: otr@otrgroup.ca

TORONTO OFFICE
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MONTREAL OFFICE
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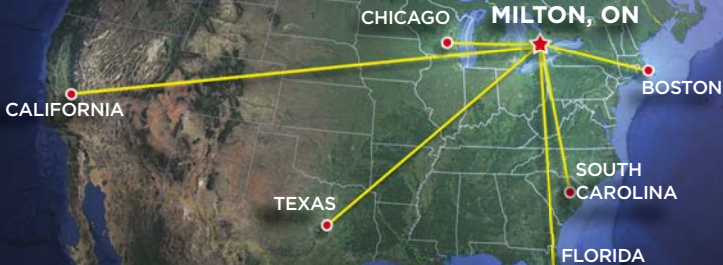
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I have been approached many times to discuss what was the best investment I ever made? After being asked that several times I finally realized that the best investment was the one I chose NOT to make. In other words, if I had made the investment I would have lost a lot of money. I have way more money today because I walked away.

I'm not trying to be "cute" about investments or come across as a smarty pants. In business, having patience and self-control are critical to long term survival. Humble submission to disciplined principles of control of your return on investment is essential.

Wise business choices don't always follow a trendy or popular position; good financial choices are often viewed as 'contrarian' in nature. When the world is 'zigging', a good choice often times mean "zagging". Good operators understand this because they are generally leery of high pressure sales, marketing schemes and politics. Many 'popular' opinions are nothing more than a strong marketing campaign with a weak

product, delivery and value system or worse yet... bad math/science. Independent operators (or all wise business people) are independent and careful thinkers who accept responsibility for their choices. They usually do their own math/science.

There are many examples of people who get rich through luck. However, in order to keep wealth, a person must be wise.

I have also been asked how to get rich. Most people when they find out that I'm an accountant assume I know how to become wealthy. It's usually not a fair question because, of all the wealthy people I know, none of them accumulated their wealth the same way.

I have a standard answer that I reply to this question with. The best way to get wealthy is to work hard and gain wisdom. The goal is never to gain wealth at all costs but first to seek wisdom at all cost. There are definitely times when money/wealth comes second to gaining wisdom. Focusing on wise behavior as a priority first (before money) builds the foundation for keeping it. Wisdom not only

PRODUCES wealth but MAINTAINS your wealth at the same time.

A famous football linebacker once had an interview with a comedian. The linebacker asked the comedian what he would do if he knew a 310 pound football player was rushing towards him wanting to level him. How many more bench presses would you do? How much bulk muscle would you want to build? The comedian replied, none... I'd step aside and let him pass. Not only was that funny it was wise. We don't have to fight every battle. We don't have to play every game just because it's exciting or trendy to do so. Wisdom requires patience and humility.

I was fortunate enough to attend the 2014 Truck World convention in Toronto. While there I performed a very quick and informal interview with about 1000 independent operators. I found out that about 70% of them drove pre-emission trucks. That means that as a whole, operators avoided the new, untested emission equipment that was being sold at the time. As a general observation, that collective choice was wise. They avoided playing a game that they saw could end up with them in a financial hospital.

Some operators (and even carriers) have avoided playing games with equipment by purchasing 'gliders' or even deleting technology. They do so to avoid being hit by a 310 pound linebacker.

When/if the ELD rules are fully implemented, everyone is wondering what impact it will have on Canadian trucking. Will there be technology that

will circumvent it or will the market rates be adjusted for their effect? I guess time will tell.

The trucking industry too often views operators as unpredictable and non-trainable. In some regards the industry is right, it's very much like herding cats. If independent operators are responsible for their own future, they must be left free to be wise or foolish. They should be able to buy what they want, when they want and service it however they want it serviced. They should also be left to sell their asset and not play the game anymore. It's their asset; their future; their business. The wise ones will make the right choice.

About the Author:

Robert D. Scheper is a leading Accountant and Consultant to the Lease/Owner operator industry in Canada. His first book in the Making Your Miles Count series "taxes, taxes, taxes" was released in 2007. His firm exclusively serves Lease/Owner Operators across Canada. His second book "Choosing a Trucking company" is the most in-depth analysis of the operator industry available today. He has a Master degree (MBA) in financial management and has been serving the industry since he and his wife came off the road in 1993. His dedication, commitment and strong opinions can be read and heard in many articles and seminars.

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SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE

Ray J. Haight



The Elephant in the Room

I have been asked on many occasions to take on a subject that I have touched on several occasions, but that I've never really gone at 'head on'. There are probably a couple of good reasons for this including, but not limited to, the fact that this subject is a bit of a rabbit hole. It can easily lead to many different places once you start heading down this road and you are likely to disenfranchise yourself with any number of folks regardless of what position you take on this subject. Having said all that, let's get at it. I have said in the past and it is still true today, at times, there is nothing more illusive than an obvious fact and this is one of those times!

The obvious fact is that we live in a free market society whose economy runs on a supply and demand structure. The market will dictate the remuneration you're paid, determined on the specialty of your trade or skill in conjunction with the scarcity of workers in your sector. So if one is to put forth the position that drivers are vastly underpaid, the argument that there is a driver shortage holds no water and must be false. You simply can't have it both ways.

To do this subject justice might require more than one article and it will definitely need your input, so please give me your feedback as I want to hear from you on this; both drivers and executives. I will give you my opinion on the only two paradigms that matter on this subject; first the driver's, then the company's.

When I look at this subject from a driver's prospective I don't blame any of you for being completely confused. Over the past many years you have repeatedly heard and repeatedly been told that there is a driver shortage that is now at a critical stage. The problem is, if this is in fact the case, then why hasn't the average driver wage reflected that reality? Depending on where you search, the internet results you can expect to see is an average annual pay rate between \$50K and \$65K. Often this depends on where in the country you are based and/or the sector of trucking you work in. Owner Operator's numbers are vastly different (\$200-\$225K gross) but the take home amount can be the same. The difference is that an O/O will usually pay less tax.

Obviously something is amiss and has been for quite some time as extreme shortages and \$50K to \$65K annually does not add up. To be accurate, there are companies out there that have drivers making markedly more than this and likely, there are some that pay less. The number I use is an average as I found numbers from \$38K to \$100K. A typical driver take home pay is greater for the most part than that of the general average employment sectors but I can see a high frustration level when folks in our profession are continually told of the egregious situation that the industry is facing with its overall lack of drivers.

It's hard to bridge the gap between what we continually hear and read from industry trade magazines and the national press and what we see in the numbers and average pay scales. The two don't add up so what's one to do if you are a driver? A number of things come to mind, especially in light of the fact that any number of driver surveys over the past couple decades reveal that often money is not always the major factor or the top reason for a driver to quit their current carrier.

There are two messages here: one is for you the driver to always be checking the market to ensure that you are being paid at or preferably above market rates for your services. If your research reveals that you are not, I would have the discussion with your employer and let them explain their perception of the situation. The second message is of course, for the employers: that they need to make driver pay packages understandable and explain them clearly. I suggest an average base pay rate, certainly no less than industry average for your sector is a good platform to start with. Then a gain share bonus plan predicated on all the familiar touch points; fuel burn, accident free miles, longevity and production; whatever they are for your company. These bonuses should provide the driver with the opportunity to get to the top of the range of driver wages in your area. Finally, the most critical part of the strategy is that the company needs these gain share bonus plans to be obtainable, under promised and over delivered. What a concept right! You get this part right and the word gets out and you may have something. You'd think anyway. Reality is - maybe not, because surprise - surprise, there is another twist waiting around the corner and it's called a Human Resources Strategy and driver satisfaction.

So driver, assuming you've done your homework, you are now aware of where you stand with your company's payment schedule relative to the rest of the market in your area. You can stop looking for greener grass and get to work now. Correct? Not quite. I have discussed Maslow's hierarchy of needs in previous articles and that we as human beings are driven to needs in a sequential order as it is in our nature as human beings. For us to truly enjoy the sense of physiological (or money) needs we have achieved, we now need to move on to the safety level and then of course up to the belongingness, esteem and finally self-actualization levels. If a company decides to lead the industry with their wage package they will still be challenged to retain their drivers unless they offer an entire package that includes a sense of community and all that goes with it.

Is there a driver shortage? To me the numbers reflected in driver wages would suggest there isn't - not that I can see anyway. When I ask most executives about their turnover rates, very rarely do I get a definitive clear answer. There is usually some hesitation and what looks to me as a very loose estimate of where they are at. This needs to change and until carriers realize that this subject needs to come out of the closet and be a daily focus; I worry that moving forward we will continue to be an industry that confuses driver shortages with driver wage levels.

If you have some thoughts on this topic please let me know, I'd love to hear from you.

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Ray J. Haight
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Ask for Recruiting



Why Your Trucking Company Gives You a Letter When You Make a Mistake

You received one! One of those 'canned' letters that the safety department spits out every time that you get a ticket, violation or crash. Every time that you do something wrong you get that darn letter. Why?

Well, some of it has to do with the company doing a little "CYA." You know, cover your behind. But in truth very little is to do with 'CYA'. For trucking companies, both the MTO and DOT require the company to have a discipline policy. This policy is to spell out what happens to you, the driver, when an infraction happens. The MTO specifically asks that all carriers or trucking companies write a letter to the driver and tell the driver that they made a mistake. And that this mistake is just one stage of the discipline process.

In other words, trucking companies are required to have a discipline policy that lays out to both the management and the drivers exactly what happens when a driver makes a mistake or gets into trouble. This system should be set out in stages. A standard policy is the Four Step Policy. Stage One is a verbal warning; Stage Two is a written warning; Stage Three will be a suspension and finally, the Fourth and final step is termination. Most policies also include a mandatory training portion. I know, you often think that the training part is the worst of it. You must return to class or watch a

video and perhaps listen to a lecture. All this activity is for stuff and things that you already know about and all just because you made a mistake.

Let me take an unpopular stand here and defend this training. It has been my experience when holding training sessions with drivers that some of them are very poorly trained. It is either that the original training was deficient or they have forgotten a lot. An example: Recently, at a meeting, several drivers asked me about very basic hours of service rules. Then they proceeded to tell me about a rule that is wrong and misinterpreted. So, training for drivers is often needed.

The letter that you receive should follow a set process. By following the written and documented system the company is doing several things. They are treating you fairly by giving you notice, training and documenting the process. Should the company ever have to defend your actions in court, they have created a good defense. As well, by meeting requirements for the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO), the company is showing that they are paying attention and even though they are not in the cab of the truck with you as you travel down the highway, the company is doing its best to monitor and encourage safe behavior. As well, they are creating records for

the Ministry of Labour and in doing so, they are doing things and creating records to use should they ever have to suspend or dismiss you from the company. They are documenting their actions. Let's not forget the insurance companies; they want this process followed and recorded. They think that it may reduce crashes. I for one believe that they are correct.

I know you take pride in your performance as a driver and when you get this letter it hurts you. When you receive a letter reminding you that you made a mistake, part of the reason that you don't like it is that it hurts.

What I'm trying to tell you is that these corrective action letters are necessary. They help you, the driver by explaining what

behavior is acceptable. They are encouraging you to do better. Of course, they are good for the company too in that they can prove to those that care that they are genuinely trying to have their drivers behave acceptably.

So there you have it. The answer to "why did I get this letter?" Stay safe and don't do anything to prompt a letter.

Chris Harris

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Honesty, Please

A recent report from Stay Metrics, a driver engagement platform, stated that of the 100 professional drivers hired today, 33 of them will quit within three months and another 22 percent will be gone within six months. These numbers should tell us something.

It's not only difficult to attract and retain drivers, it's expensive. The American Trucking Associations reported a slight increase in recent turnover rates at large fleets, despite turnover rates remaining at what they called, "historically low levels." The ATA turnover rate or the percentage of drivers, who leave a fleet on a calendar basis, is at 74 percent.

What if 74 percent of your recruiters left every year? What if 74 percent of your human resource department left every year? Why do we accept this level of "resignations" from our drivers?

When I want insight from professional drivers, I turn to the nearly 11,000 members on our Facebook page. Recently I asked them to offer a piece of advice for recruiters. The response was overwhelming and most of the comments were about honesty.

In fact, nearly every posting was about being misled by a recruiter. "The recruiter sets the

stage for [the] driver's experience," wrote Kim, "If it starts out with lies, the driver will always have a bit of resentment the whole time they are with the carrier."

Many of the comments were about understanding what a driver is looking for at a carrier. "Please do not try to just let me fill a seat," said Pam, "instead, find out if the company and myself would be a good fit." Drivers felt that recruiters weren't looking out for the driver's best interest, but spent more time selling the company than listening to drivers.

"Don't tell me what you think I want to hear," wrote Cheyenne. Many of the remarks were advice on being honest about the negatives as well as the positives about a company, because the driver will find out about the policy later and could leave as a result of the misinformation. Omitting information is as bad as lying about something.

Deb wrote, "Don't waste everyone's time and money by not stating the job properly and not revealing all the company's policies from accepting loads to home time."

Another theme from the drivers was about the relationship after the driver is hired.

"Don't let the kindness stop at recruiting," said Dan. Recruiters should continue to stay in touch to ensure the driver is not becoming unhappy with the carrier. One driver said his recruiter called him before orientation, the night after his first class and several times during his hiring and training experience and said he appreciated the contact.

In a follow up to the request for advice for recruiters, I posted a poll to ask for the top misconception they were told by their last recruiter. The number one response was "not enough miles." Forty percent of the respondents said they were misled about the number of miles they were running once they were hired.

A close second misunderstanding reported by the drivers was that their home time was not as promised. Stay Metrics found that men are more likely to leave a company because they want more home time. Women reportedly leave due to equipment issues. This research involved 12,502 driver's responses at 78 carriers. Perhaps women ask more probing questions to better understand the time away from home expectations.

Although a pet policy wasn't high on the list of recruiter's misconceptions it was mentioned a number of times by drivers. From the number of pets to the size and even the breed type, recruiters gave the wrong information to drivers with pets. "I called a company and they said all the

pets would be no problem," wrote Kari, "then I show up for orientation and the policy is one pet." She added, "Since drivers have pets both for security reasons and for companionship, a pet policy is an important one to understand up front".

Stop lying, be honest, offer the truth and similar remarks were the top advice suggestions from the group. The recruiting industry has an image problem and it is proven by the high turnover numbers at most carriers.

The solution seems simple enough as stated by Angela, "honesty please."

Ellen Voie

President/CEO/Founder of
Women In Trucking, Inc.
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Phone 1-866-239-9889 Email cntldrivers@cn.ca Fax 1-866-803-2702

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