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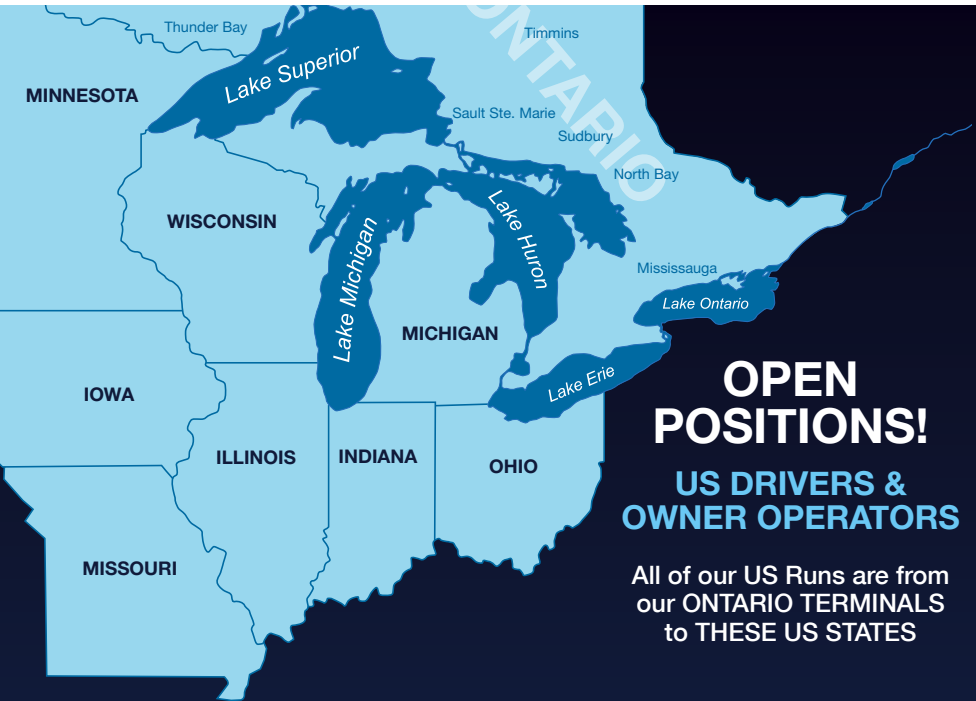
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MAKING YOUR MILES COUNT

Robert D. Scheper



Let Your Name Be Your Brand

Choosing a trucking company isn't a once in a lifetime choice for successful independent operators. The choice to work for a carrier is an ongoing decision to work with a repeat customer. It goes much deeper than yes/no or sign/walk away.

A successful independent operator continually looks to find a healthy balance between better serving their customer (the carrier) and personal profitability. Once at the carrier, the operator must find lanes and loops that produce the best returns for himself/herself while creating value for their repeat customer (the carrier). It's not always just lanes and loops but also getting to know their many specific needs. Do the carrier's customers need special assistance? What consideration or service is the shipper/receiver interested in?

Building a strong and healthy relationship WITHIN the carrier is building the independent operators "brand name" (which is usually the actual name of the operator). Building yourself into a high level operator in a payroll list of drivers takes time, sacrifice, patience and commitment. Reputation and notoriety is built over time; mile by mile, month by month and year over year.

With a positive reputation the operator has the highest chance of producing the

greatest return on investment and effort. During down/slow times a good reputation can protect an operator from layoffs (contract cancellation) or squeezing of revenue to the point of unrealistic sacrifice. Building a brand name and maximizing your potential through reinvestment should be everyone's goal.

All carriers live or die by their reputation. Anyone can calculate a carrier's reputation by summing the collective reputation of all their drivers and staff... but mostly the drivers. In the trucking industry, often times the name of the founder becomes the name of the carrier. Some call the industry ego-based because of it. I believe it's based on reputation... not ego. That is why (in my opinion) ethics and integrity is integral to the trucking industry. It's what builds and sustains long term strength and prosperity.

Too many operators (and sometimes carriers) would rather just sell their service as a "no name" or generic brand, nothing special, just the cheapest service from A to B. It's not the end of the world business model but operators must remember they don't have access to volume business (especially now with ELD's) like any "no name" carrier is trying to capture.

With integrity being the foundation of an industry, I was reminded of the famous

saying by courts all across the free world. "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?" Building truth in a society filled with deception is critical to building your brand name. The saying (quote) is broken down to three parts: the truth (which equals truth), the whole truth (which implies that sometimes less than the truth is being communicated) and finally nothing but the truth (which implies that things are added to the truth that distracts from what the truth is). For those algebra geeks out there, here is the formula for that saying:

$$T = T$$

$$T \neq T - x$$

$$T \neq T + x$$

Building a brand name requires the truth.... the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Ultimately it means everyone is taking responsibility for their actions. If someone doesn't, reputation suffers.

Even though reputation is built mile by mile, month over month and year over year, destruction of reputation can happen all in one day. Most destruction comes in the form of attitude but somewhere in the situation someone is simply not taking responsibility for behavior or performance. The only true solution is to apologize and make things right. If a person will humble themselves, they can even repair their reputation to a stronger brand name than before. However, that takes courage and an

internal will to build themselves into something truly great.

If operators don't intend to take responsibility for their actions then choosing the generic "no name brand" carrier is probably the best model to have. Just remember, if a customer has a choice to use a good brand name verses a generic no name... chances are they will use the brand name. If a customer needs to release someone... they will always release a no name brand before a brand name.

Either way, it's your business, your 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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Driver Wages - Part 2 - Win/Win

I have been out and about since the last article; a couple of times to Texas, last week to Toronto for the Surface Transportation Seminar and next week I'm off to Mississauga to the Bridging Border Barriers session presented by the Truckload Carriers Association. I have also been busy as the author of the just released Driver Retention Masterclass series through Vertical Alliance that can be found at:

www.infinitiworkforce.com/experts/expert-modules-library/driver-retention-masterclass

I know, this is a shameless act of self-promotion. Oh well, it's a good program - what can I say.

Releasing this new retention program has granted me the opportunity to talk to many fleets and to facilitate a number of workshops on both sides of the border, which I greatly enjoy. As you may recall, last month I cautiously dipped my toe into the subject of driver wages and I thank many of you for your comments and feedback. I love to hear from you folks. This month I think it would be valuable to any number of carriers and drivers who might read this article to give you some more thinking material on the same subject.

In my workshops I stress that carriers have to know where they are in relationship to the rest of the market on driver wages. It bewilders me when I ask companies what their turnover numbers are and find out that they are much higher than what they would like. My second question is, 'What are you paying drivers in relationship to the market they compete in?' only to hear back that they are middle of the road or below the mid-point. And many are not sure how they measure up at all, not a clue. Hey, I'm no Warren Buffet but I think we might have

identified where one of the issues might be with your turnover!

With a lot of carriers I think they feel stuck, kind of the chicken or the egg type scenario. If you pay the drivers more than you are currently paying, you might eliminate the thin margin that you currently have (which might not be good but is at least black ink). The problem with that logic is that it misses the very thing that will actually increase your margin. Part of the solution to both issues is a win/win program, a share in the gain opportunity.

I know there are carriers doing this now but not near enough from what I have seen. From the mountains of data that is readily available in today's world it has never been easier to build a set of metrics; MPG, safe driving, hard braking, clean inspections, accidents and claims to name just a few. Create a reliable scorecard predicated on where your fleet is now on these items and what the potential gain is for your bottom line, and then generously reward the drivers individually on their performance related to each item.

That is what is called a win/win! In addition and to assist the driver, you offer education on each item so that they can learn how to be best in class on each of them. This type of system has the potential for the driver to earn their way to the top of the pay scale in the industry and of course increase the carrier's bottom line substantially.

A word of warning to carriers is to not go down this road unless you have your act together. There is a lot of base work that has to go into this program. There would be nothing worse

than rolling this out if you don't have a very clear picture for every driver as to exactly what the potential size of the reward is, how you will administer the program and how you will ensure the integrity of the program.

I recommend that companies start slowly and bring in more items as they work the bugs out of the ones you start with; MPG is an obvious one that can easily be measured and rewarded. An example: if you were to set eight miles per gallon as a goal and you are currently realizing seven miles per gallon, you can do the math for yourself, but if you were to use \$1.15 per liter, the savings are in the range of eight cents per mile. A hundred thousand miles is \$8,000.00 so why not split that with the driver? You get an extra \$4K and so do they. Continue with the other metrics and you're starting to accumulate some serious money as a carrier and the driver is now vested in the results of the truck.

Once you have your numbers rolling in and you are starting to enjoy the win/win results, one could even go further with this type of thing and get your company involved in a benchmarking program so that you can measure your results to other comparable companies to see if you're as good as you think you are.

The fixed expenses involved with the operation of a trucking company are solidly within the domain of management; equipment cost, facility overhead, plates and on and on. Once these are negotiated for their respective term, that's it, nothing you can do until renewal and then you start negotiating again. Where the cash is hidden is in how the variables are managed in the things that generally are in the domain of the driver. How do we reward that person? Usually do it by the mile.

Now I'm not suggesting anything here but, aren't these two ideas diametrically opposed? I want a driver to operate my equipment as efficiently as possible at all times but I will reward the driver solely on production of miles.

The balance and the win/win here is for the company to train, entrust and reward the driver in such a way as to operate the equipment as efficiently as possible while at the same time professionally executing the delivery of the customer's goods.

The use of Speed Governors and Electronic Logging Devices means 'turn and burn' is soon to be gone forever and good riddance. Drivers, if you are at a company that still operates that way, you need to be looking around for a better gig, and if I were you I might be looking for one that offers to reward you for your professionalism in a fashion that might resemble the win/win described above.

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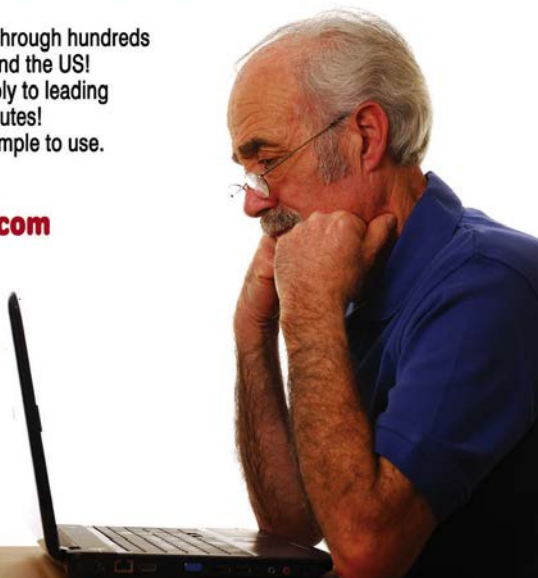
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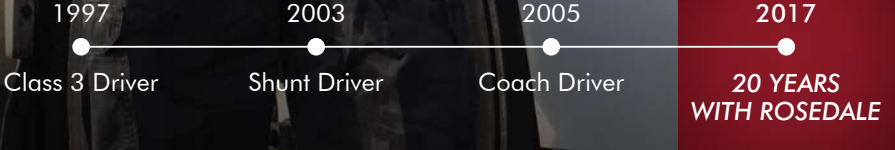


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Winter Driving Distances

Holy Smoke! I can't believe that another summer has flown by. I've seen some snowflakes and depending on where you are situated, you might be in the midst of winter weather. Winter driving is upon us once again.

You long-haul guys see all the bad weather. Already parts of Canada and the northern USA have seen snow. So I believe it is time to once again remind you about a few safe driving techniques that have proven over and over to be safe driving habits.

The most obvious is your following distance. You need a good following space at all times but when the weather is bad outside, you need even more space. How much space? Well, on dry pavement, when you are traveling at 105 km's you need 660 feet to stop safely. I hear you! I know 660 feet is a massive amount of space. And if you are in a major city, you are thinking that there is no way that you can keep 660 feet between you and the next vehicle - those four wheelers keep jumping into your safety cushion. And you are also reminding me that I said on dry pavement. What is a truck driver to do? Park the truck?

Over the years I've heard it all, excuses as to why drivers can't keep the space. And I will continue to listen to it. I'm doing a

'Winter Driver Meeting' this Saturday and I will be discussing with drivers this very topic. I know that some will be vocal and express themselves, and other drivers will sit silently and say to themselves, 'It just can't be done, 660 feet. What the heck is he talking about?'

Here is what I hear all of the time, "Darn four-wheelers, they don't know how to drive around trucks. They don't know how much space I need to stop". This is certainly true for many drivers, not just car operators.

Am I different from you? I know that when I drive on the 401 in southern Ontario that I can keep the space. Well, at least some of the time I can keep it. I see other truck drivers being able to keep the space most of the time as well. How can they do it? Are you are telling me that there is no way for you to keep your safety cushion most of the time? Notice that I didn't say all the time. That is because I know that 'All of the time' is likely not possible. At least it's not very likely while you are on major highways within a city like Toronto, Chicago or Los Angeles. But how do some truck operators manage to keep the space most of the time?

They are moving just a tiny bit slower than the flow of the traffic. In this way, even when a car or another truck takes away

your space cushion, the cushion quickly re-appears because they are moving slower than the general flow of traffic. That is how they are maintaining their space most of the time.

Now remember that I started this article by referencing winter driving. Now I have a question for you; how much space do you need on wet pavement if you need 660 feet on dry pavement? We are getting into winter driving and wet pavement is going to happen. And by the way, 660 feet is about the length of two football fields so what do you think? Well, if you thought around four football fields for wet pavement or about 1200

feet you would be correct and get the Safety Dawg pat on the back.

So if you think that driving on dry pavement is challenging to keep enough space to be safe, you will need to think of strategies to have even more space on the wet winter roads. But it is definitely worth trying to do.

Please be safe out there.

Chris Harris

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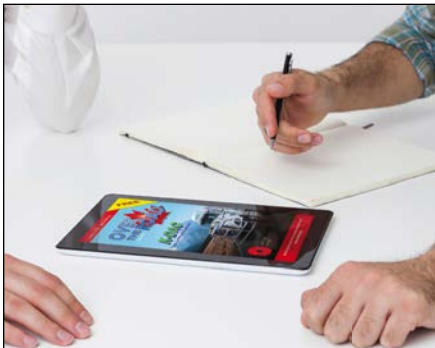
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Atlantis	36	Keypoint Carriers	45	Speaking from Experience ..	28,29
AYR Motor Express	39	Keystone Western.....	43	TCA InGuage	27
Canhua Transport	46	Kriska Transportation	4	Tenold	9
Carmen Transportation Group ..	41	Laidlaw	34	Thompson Emergency	6
Chris Harris - Safety Dawg Inc.	40,41	Liberty Linehaul	13	Tippets World	25
CNTL.....	50	Linamar	8	Total Logistics	38
Drive Star.....	22	McKevitt Trucking Ltd.....	11	TRANSAM Carriers	2
Eassons Transportation Group ..	17	Midwest Transit.....	23	Trans-frt McNamara	26
FTI.....	46	Nishan Transport.....	3	Transpro Freight Systems.....	25
Genesis Express	30	Nu-era Freight Lines.....	16	TransX Group of Companies	42
H8 Media	32	OTR Digital	44	Truckdriver.com	30
Highland	14	Pival Expedite	16	VeeBoards	13,25
Highlight Motor Freight	7	Premier Bulk Systems	10	VersaCold	24
Hyndman	12,47	Primex Transource	5	Women in Trucking	48
Infiniti-i	19	Quik X Transportation.....	35	Walmart.....	18
JBT Transport.....	15	Robert Scheper Article	20,21		
K-DAC Expedite	3	Rosedale Group	37		



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WOMEN IN TRUCKING

Ellen Voie



Are you a thought leader?

Do your peers often seek out your insight or advice on subjects they might be pondering? Can you point out individuals whose opinions you trust and who you might turn to for advice? A "thought leader" by definition is someone whose views on a subject are taken to be authoritative and influential.

At a recent Transportation Marketing and Sales Association conference I had the opportunity to participate in a Thought Leadership Workshop where we discussed case studies and determined the proper outcomes by influencing the other participants to support our conclusions.

During the workshop, participants were asked to name thought leaders in the area of transportation and logistics. I was honored to be identified as one of these role models, which led me to wonder how someone becomes a thought leader and why others perceive him or her to be influential.

How do you become a thought leader? You must first identify your passion. Denise Brousseau of the Thought Leadership Lab suggests you define a future you are committed to transform, test your ideas on others and look for people who can help you promote this change. Be the leader, but teach others how to expand on your mission, then, connect with as wide an audience as possible and move the momentum forward.

According to Lauren Hockenson, in an article on Mashable.com, a thought leader differs from a leader by "pushing the boundaries of a particular method or industry and then using those ideas to leverage ubiquity on social or broadcast media."


She adds, "A thought leader had earned his or her title because the person's ideas have gone viral."

In 2007, if you had told me the Women In Trucking (WIT) Association would have 4,000 members in seven countries and would include carriers, drivers, suppliers, manufacturers and training facilities, I would have been in disbelief. How did we gain this influence? What we had was a passion to increase the percentage of women employed in the transportation industry and we have built momentum with our partners and our members.

Thought Leaders writes Brousseau, "are changing the world in meaningful ways and engage others to join their efforts." In doing so she adds, "They provide a method, process, guidelines or a set of best practices," for others to follow.

A primary goal identified by the WIT Board of Directors is to be a resource. We want the association to be the first stop for any information that carriers, legislators, regulators and media are seeking. In order to be recognized as an authority, we need good, unbiased information including facts, quotes and relevant data. This is why we reach out to our members for feedback and insight, as you are the people we represent.

We continue to provide information to help you support our mission. From a "Recruiting Guide for Female Drivers" to our "Anti-Harassment Employment Guide," we want to take the collective knowledge of our members to share across the industry. Soon we will have a "Best Practices" guide to increase your female driver population.



The integrity of the information is increased when there is a larger group to provide the data. The information is more relevant and timely when the focus of the research is also interested in the collective outcomes.

Without the support of a wide network, you won't gain the attention for your product or service and can't expand your sphere of influence. People want to look up to leaders who are not only passionate about the mission but have proven momentum and the support of other influential people.

Being a thought leader and being in the spotlight is taking a risk. In other words, there is an element of risk in promoting change and then identifying it as a solution, as not all ideas result in positive consequences. Also, there will be the naysayers who prefer to denigrate your work rather than support it, but these people are usually not credible and certainly not Thought Leaders themselves.

If you are passionate about making a difference and leaving the world a better place than when you arrived, keep pushing and expanding your influence. You too, can become a thought leader. Consider these words from John Maxwell, "A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way."

Ellen Voie

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Mission: Women In Trucking was established to encourage the employment of women in the trucking industry, promote their accomplishments and minimize obstacles faced by women working in the trucking industry.

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