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1189694 Ontario Ltd. C.O.B. as Over The Road
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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 Parklen Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 3G9

1.800.416.8712 • 613.224.9947

Fax: 613.224.8825

Email: otr@otrgroup.ca

TORONTO OFFICE

advertising information

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—Vince Burt, Truck #923

LITTLE ROCK FARM *Trucking*

If you visit Walkerton, Ontario and drive to Little Rock Farm Trucking, you will enter through a paved entrance that is open and spacious. An aptly-coloured building plus a shop with four bays reflect the company's name. Inside, Dispatch doubles as reception and while you wait, you see that every call is answered with sincerity. While everyone is focused on the business at hand, they are not too busy to offer a friendly 'hello' and to see to your needs. You will be taken to the second floor board room that also doubles as their training area. It too is quaint and comfortable.

This is the experience that Ed Novoa had during his visit in mid-October. As General Manager of Over the Road Magazine, Ed enjoys working with trucking companies to learn and tell their story. John and Mark Reuber explained to him how the company came to be and where it is going. Sitting across from John and Mark Reuber, Ed's first question was, "Which one is the older brother"? With a hearty chuckle, the story begins.

Little Rock Farm Trucking was formed in 1981 by farmer and feed mill owner, Jim Scott as a hauler of feed and agricultural products. In 1993, Mark Reuber contracted his truck plus a driver to Little Rock Farm Trucking and Mark then worked inside at company operations. His brother John was an Owner Operator at the time and there are two additional Reuber brothers - Paul and David, all who are in the trucking business. The four brothers began to discuss the possibilities of purchasing the company and running it using their combined skills. Paul, Mark and John embraced the challenge while David opted out.



In February of 1994, Paul, Mark and John bought the shares from Jim Scott with each assuming 33.3% of the company ownership. After 5 years of ownership, Paul sold his 1/3 interest to his brothers and Mark and John now own and operate Little Rock Farm Trucking as equal shareholders.

Both brothers are drivers and their skill sets are complimentary to each other. John gets his hands dirty by looking over the equipment and the purchasing side of the business. Brother Mark says "I have clean hands; clean finger nails. I look after the administrative and operational stuff." Being drivers, they have created a type of company culture. Mark explains. "We're not coming to work in suits and ties with polished shoes. We feel we have a good sense of what our drivers are going through; we know the good parts and the bad parts about trucking. It helps drivers when the management team has a good understanding of what a driver is going through." He continues. "It can be disheartening

for a driver when they call in and the person that they are dealing with has no idea what the driver is going through and might not have empathy for their problem. A driver may be thousands of miles from home; hasn't seen their family in days - we know what that's like and can deal with it appropriately". John adds that it gives drivers comfort and confidence knowing that, when they call in, for whatever reason, the driver knows that they are talking with the owner and know that their issue will be taken care of immediately. Both brothers agree that the company has taken over their lives, which is not unusual for transportation. Adds Mark, "We live it from the moment we open our eyes to the moment we go to bed. So coming into work is like coming in to see the family. They both agree that they do not want Little Rock Farm to get to the point where drivers become numbers. "We are making it clear that we want to be able to recognize our drivers by their voice when they call in...we want to know who they are, who their families are and deal with them on a personal level like that."

Up until the economic bust of 2008, Little Rock Farm Trucking was hauling a great deal of automotive parts. To adjust and survive, they reworked their business and went back to their roots; they switched to hauling food stuffs and temperature-controlled commodities. They no longer haul automotive. To do that, they had

to adapt technology that is compliant while setting out strict rules for both tractor equipment and temperature-controlled regulations. They were one of the first companies to implement satellite tracking in the 90's. They follow HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) standards and C-TPAT standards. They believe that the stigma that truckers are averse to technology is long gone. The ones who were the slowest to engage in new technology are now the biggest proponents and they suffer when the technology isn't there. "It took a little while longer to teach them but now they cannot live without it".

"In all our new power units, we can monitor our reefers online for temperature and for unauthorized movement and fuel levels. We receive alerts when there is a problem and often we know the specifics of the problem. We have also enabled all our trucks with WI-FI; all drivers are assigned a tablet upon which they run their log books and to stay on top of regulations and training requirements, plus they have the ability to communicate with their family and friends. Our trucks today are like mobile offices equipped with a printer, copier and scanner. If you think about the amount of time drivers save by not having to find a truck stop or go into the truck stop to spend money on faxes, you're potentially looking at an hour of time saved through this system each time".



CARRIER PROFILE *LITTLE ROCK FARM TRUCKING*

Mark discussed the company's philosophy for growth. "We believe that each and every day, we do what we say we are going to do and we do it the very best that we can. We are growing our fleet and our customer base through service. We have found that a good driver or a bad driver is going to affect our company positively or negatively and also affect our customers the same way. We instill this philosophy into all our new hires and all of our students".

Students are a part of the future, as Mark explains, "The barrier to growth is finding qualified drivers and Little Rock Farm Trucking is addressing this by launching a driver-training curriculum for public access". Students that complete the full course will receive a Tractor Trailer AZ Diploma (approved vocational program as per Private Career College Act 2005). The training school is going to be separate from the company and it will be a private training facility. Thus, graduates will have the choice to go and drive anywhere they want to work. "Our objective is to take drivers, with or without a license and get them to a point where anyone can hire them and a fleet can feel confident that when they hire them, they can give them a set of keys and send them out on the road. The school will also have a driver refresher course for those drivers who have been out of the truck for a few years and want to re-hone their skills. Our school will be on site with our terminal which means, if we are discussing an issue such as brakes, we can take students right into the shop, get them into the pit and show them real working equipment plus have a real-life experience with a licenced mechanic".

A story was related about a young man who washed trucks on weekends and subsequently, he was taken through Little Rock Farm Trucking's driver training program. He ended up driving for them for five or six years. "We are not opposed to training someone. We just need to know we are getting a commitment to trucking", states John. He continues, "Trucking used to be a lifestyle but

now it is just another way to make money. With the different generations that have been coming into the workforce, trucking is viewed as the anti-lifestyle. Very few people want to be away from their home, their family and activities for days at a time." He goes on to conclude that trucking presents an opportunity for young people to work at driving for a few years and bank a bunch of money. Then, they can have their families and if they chose, either move into a different career, or stay in the truck.

The second barrier to growth has been controlling our capital costs. The volatility of our Canadian dollar and the unpredictability of fuel prices are the main culprits. A company can plan for a high price or a low price etc. but you cannot plan for something that has no consistency.

Despite the challenges, Little Rock Farm Trucking is doing its best to take care of the internal needs, people and customers. Mark concludes, "Moving forward our goal is as it has always been - serve the customer in such a way that growth, based on the economy, will take place organically."

When not working, John is tinkering in his workshop at home, "I love the mechanical field and I love technology. I have a workshop at home where I spend a lot of my spare time. I like cars - I used to race cars as well. Plus I live on a ten acre farm which I purchased from my mother. I tinker with some crops, I have a Harley Davidson motorcycle that's in a billion pieces and I have a 1970 Chevy Nova that I hope to fully restore someday." John lives with his wife and his twin girls who are now in college.

Mark has an interest in mechanical hobbies but he prefers to tinker with the ivory keys. "I've played piano all my life. I participate in our church services and I've done some concerts here and there." Mark and his wife have raised four children in the Walkerton area.

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Robert D. Scheper



Making Your Miles Count: Choosing a Trucking Company

Carrier contracts are NOT all the same. In fact they are sometimes worlds apart. In the Book "Making Your Miles Count: Choosing A Trucking Company," a methodical comparison of contracts reveals several key issues in Lease/ Owner Operator success. There are five issues I call deal breakers. The fifth one is "NEVER drive for a carrier who forces you to upgrade your truck (or NEVER accept any liability/cost/ sacrifice) without adequate compensation."

Operators more than ever before cannot afford to trade off their trucks for new ones unless they work at the highest paying carriers (A rated). In 1996 most B and all C rated clients had to hold onto their trucks for longer than four years in order to provide themselves a return on their investment. In 2012 all B's and C's (and even some A's) will have to hold onto their trucks longer than four years.

This observation supports the simple verbal survey I made while attending the 2014 Truck World show in Toronto. I concluded that over 60% of operators drove 6+ year old trucks and had little to no intention of "upgrading". I highly doubt that this trend will change in the next number of years or even decade.

The third deal breaker is "Never drive for a carrier that doesn't adequately compensate for all market fuel price fluctuations."

Approximately 40% of all carrier contracts still do not have adequate fuel subsidy formulas. This represents a huge risk for the entire lease operator industry. It's a risk that (in my opinion) is a deal breaker. Never get involved with a carrier that will not provide an adequate fuel subsidy that is tied to market indexes (outside management control).

This requires operators to know what type of fuel subsidy is acceptable and what type is not. The book outlines in detail how to evaluate a proper fuel subsidy (not everyone does). Once a proper subsidy is revealed it must be able to be compared to other carrier contracts. It requires both contracts you are comparing to have adequate subsidies. Too often one (or even both) will not be able to provide them. Included in an adequate subsidy is the whole topic of exchange rates. Every contract must supply exchange rate protection.

These may seem like demanding points to make to an employer. However, operators must not consider or think of themselves

as employees (with trucks); they are independent contractors with significant investments. Operators must ensure their risks are covered... NO EXCEPTIONS. If proper preparation and analysis is not made at the beginning of an employment relationship, then an operator only has themselves to blame.

Educating oneself in their profession is the operator's responsibility, not anyone else's. Gaining the knowledge for success is always worth the investment.

Robert D Scheper operates an accounting and consulting firm in Steinbach, Manitoba. He has a Master's Degree in Business Administration and is the author of the Book Series "Making Your Miles Count" (taxes, taxes, taxes in 2007) and (Choosing a Trucking Company 2015).

You can find him and his books at www.makingyourmilescount.com or 1-877-987-9787. You can also e-mail him at robert@thrconsulting.ca.

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SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE

Ray J. Haight



If You've Never Failed, You Likely Never Tried – author unknown

I know this sounds very cliché but while this past year has flown by, I, and a couple partners have been working on a new industry offering called TCA InGauge <http://www.tcaingauge.com>. We had the great unveiling on September 1st of this year and since then we have been invited to and attended numerous industry events on both sides of the border. This product is an online benchmarking/management tool for trucking companies of all sizes and so far, so good. As of the writing of this article, we have formed five, industry trucking association alliances and have over 100 trucking companies using the service. So, onward and upward. I have also had the privilege of working closely with Dan Goodwill and Associates on a number of consulting engagements and have enjoyed this immensely. I learn something new on each job we take on <http://www.dantranscon.com>. Dan and his crew are a 1st class group who do outstanding work for both shippers and trucking companies. In addition and just so the moss doesn't get under my feet, I also do some consulting on my own, most recently with Dirk Kuper and the good folks over at TruckRight who have a great new product that recently came to market <http://truckright.ca>.

One thing that has opened my eyes in all these roles is how difficult it is to get trucking company executives to spend time with some of these great new offerings. They are so busy

doing what they have always done that it is very difficult to get them to learn something new; even though they know that it will save them time and money. It's not an easy concept for everyone. You have to make time to save time. Of course, they are also busy managing the 10,000 moving parts that go into running a trucking company; been there, done that and I get it, to some extent!

Through this whole experience I have gained a respect for those trucking companies that are open to new ideas and systems; the ones that make innovation part of their culture, whether they are a big or small carrier. Typically, we in this industry will let everyone else test the waters before we entertain the possibility of the indoctrination of a new process or system. I thoroughly understand the old analogy of pioneers being the first ones with arrows in their backs, but by the same token, none of us would be where we are today if we hadn't taken a little risk in our lives and our business.

The secret to deciding on whether or not to try a new product or service, whether you're an Owner Operator or a fleet owner is in the comparison of the risk/cost factor to the potential revenue/reward. In the difficult decisions I have had to make in my career I have typically followed the same procedure after all the facts are collected and an ROI (return on investment) has been done and

reviewed. I would draw a line horizontally down the middle of a lined piece of paper. On the top of the page I write what the new service, procedure or product is that I am considering moving forward with. Under that I also articulate, in one short sentence, what I see as the potential benefit of this change. Next step is that on one side of the page I write the pros and on the other side the cons concerning the implications of making this decision. When I was done I would put it aside for at least 24 hours and continue to think it through. Part of this exercise might just reveal additional information that you need to precede to your final decision.

The other method I used a lot when time was of the essence and I needed to move quickly is the smell test. It works like this. I look things over as completely as I can and then try and find where it stinks. Sounds simple and sometimes it is. Other times though it's not so easy. The root of all of this is that there are times when you just need to trust your gut, hard as this might be; trust it. For years I was intimidated by people with education and academic credentials. Here I was this young trucker who never showed any interest whatsoever in academics, sitting around boardroom tables with lawyers and Chartered Accountants. And talking to bank managers was intimidating to say the least. It took me a number of years to learn that all the education in the world will not begin to replace common sense and the courage to follow your natural instinct and unwavering passion. Many of the decisions that I regret the most are the ones where I didn't trust my instinct and I followed the advice of someone who had the educational credentials but didn't have my instincts. My bad, not theirs. I blame no one for where I am in this world. I did everything

perfectly for me to be where I am right now, no doubt about it and by the way, so did you!

I vividly remember when we decided that we would start a company and apply for an operating authority for our own company. I went and spoke to two professionals; one was an experienced transportation lawyer in London and another was a local Chartered Accountant. They both told us to play it safe and not take the risk. In retrospect, it might have been because we already had two mortgages on our house at the time. Of course we didn't listen and went ahead anyway.

In between then and now there has been a lot of water under the bridge... some of it sweet smelling and some of it foul. That being said I am not one of those folks who suggest that if they had it all to do over again they wouldn't change a thing, because I definitely would change many decisions that I have made and as they say if you've never failed you likely never tried. After all, as we all know, it's never about the happy ending; it's always about the story!

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Ray J. Haight
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Chris Harris



WEATHER SURVIVAL

It is December already! Another year is close to ending and winter is here. I have been performing a lot of driver meetings recently and in each meeting I stress the need for all commercial drivers to have a 'survival kit'.

During these meetings I remind the drivers of the Buffalo snowstorm a few winters ago. Trucks and cars were stranded for more than 30 hours. Five or six years ago on Highway 402 just outside of Sarnia, a similar situation happened. Cars and trucks were stranded due to heavy snowfall and terrible road conditions. In both cases, the highways were closed and vehicles could not move.

And remember that a survival kit is not just for bad weather situations. You could be involved in a crash at any time of the year and be stranded. Or a breakdown in equipment could leave you stranded. You need to be prepared! So what is it that you need in your survival kit?

For the winter, the first key to survival is a full fuel tank! If you know you are heading into bad weather, don't let your fuel tanks get below half. Keep them topped up just in case. And you'll need some food. High-energy food is always best. For example; energy bars, cereals or chocolate bars. Water is important to have on hand and is the preferred beverage, but

other liquids can be substituted. Have some extra, dry clothing; if you're in bad weather and any of your clothing items get wet or torn, you will want to have something clean and dry to put on. Spare blankets are also important as it can get awfully cold without a source of heat in the sleeper berth of the truck. I recommend carrying hiker's blankets. These can be purchased at many outdoor stores. A 3' x 6' blanket when purchased comes in a package approximately 2" x 4" by half inch deep. They are compact and made out of a metallic material. This could save your life.

I mentioned lack of heat. A very good source of heat are candles. If you make the area small enough, one candle will keep the temperature above freezing. You'll also need to light that candle so you'd better have some matches. In my survival kit I keep my wooden matches in a waterproof container that has the flint on the bottom. This way, no matter what happens, my matches are dry and I have a way to light my candles. I suggest that you also include a large metal tin can. I personally use a 2 pound coffee tin that I purchased full of coffee from Costco. I prefer the metal tins because when I place my candle in the tin it performs two functions. The metal tin heats up and helps distribute the warmth and from a safety perspective, if I was

to fall asleep and the candle fell over it will not start a fire in the metal tin can.

A battery-powered or hand-crank working flashlight is very useful. Also think of your prescription medicine. Always carry more than you need for the length of your trip. If I plan to be away for seven days then I would carry at least ten days of prescription medicine. And remember, if you are crossing the border, all prescription drugs must be in their original containers.

So there you have it. Your survival kit needs to include fuel, food, liquids, dry clothing, blankets, candles, matches, a tin can, a

flashlight and prescription medicines. Some other nice things to have in your survival kit would be a first aid kit, chemical hand and foot warmers and an ice scraper. Please make it a priority to put together a survival kit and keep it in your truck. I hope you'll never have to use it.

Stay safe.

Chris Harris

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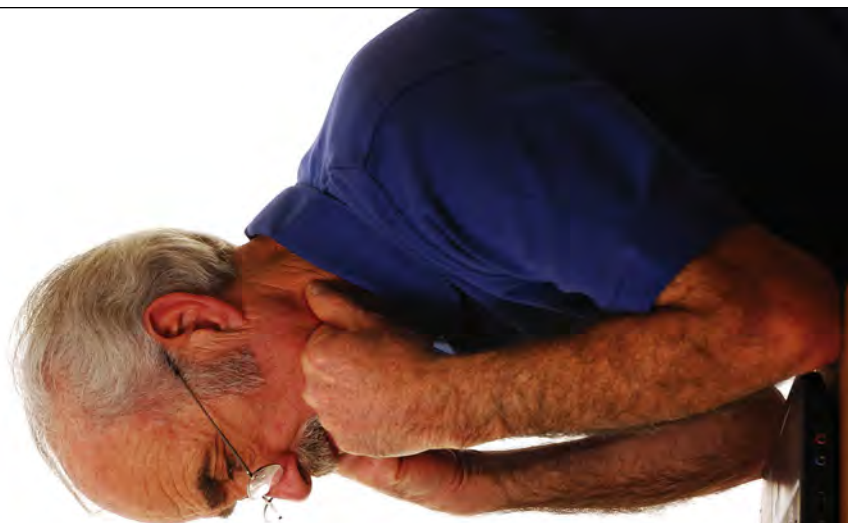


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WOMEN IN TRUCKING

Ellen Voie



Mentoring as a Valuable Retention Approach

Remember back to your first day on the job? You had so many questions but you weren't always sure who to ask. Whether it was learning where to store your lunch, hang your coat or finding your way around the office, you needed someone to steer you in the right direction.

Finding someone who will guide you around the office or the industry will provide you with a resource when questions arise. A mentor is a person who will lead you and support you as you become familiar with the organization and your new role.

Most successful people attribute at least some of their accomplishments to their mentor's influence. If you've never had this level of insight from a more seasoned colleague, then consider reaching out for a mentor now. Regardless of where you are in the company or industry, there will always be someone who has some wisdom to offer.

Why would you want or need a mentor? Consider the value someone could bring to your career as a coach or teacher.

For someone starting out, a mentor can help you adjust to the company's culture. What clothing is appropriate to wear? How much autonomy do you have in making decisions? What level of risk is acceptable? A mentor can

also help you identify people who are there to support you, such as the human resource manager or the janitorial staff.

A mentor will be available to respond to your questions and concerns but more importantly, he or she will try to anticipate some of the challenges you will be facing and address them before you've been deterred.

Your mentor can help you set goals for both your work and your personal growth. This person can then help you work toward these objectives and encourage you along the way. A mentor can also introduce you to people and resources who can assist you in your career.

For those of you who have been working in your chosen field or company for a while, a mentor can still be a professional asset for further advancement. In addition to motivating and encouraging you, a mentor can help you get back on track if you're moving in the wrong direction. He or she can help identify areas where you might need help.

Finding someone who is willing to share his or her experiences to help you avoid mistakes is invaluable. Once you work with your advisor for any length of time, this person will help you by pointing out weaknesses and encouraging your strengths. You want your mentor to be up front

with you and provide an honest assessment of your abilities. Your friends may not tell you that your public speaking skills are lacking, but a mentor will!

Companies who encourage mentorship have found a positive increase in both morale and engagement. This not only makes the mentee a happier employee, but it increases retention and boosts productivity.

If you haven't established a mentoring program at your company, consider the benefits and create either an informal or a formal partnership by providing the resources for your employees. You can create a bulletin board type infrastructure where potential mentors can write a brief biography and allow a mentee to contact them for follow up. There are software programs available for this.

You can also provide an onsite opportunity for potential mentors and mentees to meet and find common ground before they make a formal commitment.

Women In Trucking Association has a mentorship match up service for our members on our website (<http://mentorboard.careerwebsite.com/WIT>). This service is for drivers, owner-operators, safety professionals, technicians, executives, and anyone willing to lead or who wishes to learn from another member.

"If you cannot see where you are going, ask someone who has been there before."

— J Loren Norris, Author

Ellen Voie

President/CEO/Founder of
Women In Trucking, Inc.
P O Box 400 Plover, WI 54467-0400
ellen@womenintrucking.org
888-464-9482 920-312-1350 Direct
Twitter | LinkedIn | Facebook | YouTube
www.womenintrucking.org

Sign up for our weekly newsletter here.
<http://multibriefs.com/optin.php?wit>

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.