

Driver Retention

WHY YOUR DRIVERS AREN'T STICKING AROUND
AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT



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Driver retention is one of the top concerns in all of CDL driver recruiting, and it's showing no signs of going away any time soon. For Max Farrell, Co-Founder and CEO of [WorkHound](#), helping recruiters and HR team address the issues and opportunities surrounding driver retention is his calling. Workhound is an industry-leading company that helps increase recruiting and retention in high-turnover industries like trucking and manufacturing.

This eBook explores why driver retention is so important and introduces some of the best practices Ferrell and the Workhound team introduce to clients looking to proactively address retention strategies.



Why Do Drivers Leave?

Many CDL driver recruiters are faced with the same conundrum: they are focused on and dedicated to bringing in new drivers, but existing drivers are leaving the organization just as fast. There is no way to keep up when the 'bucket' is so full of holes. Long-term hires are a boon to carriers. They're happier, safer, more productive, and they generate more revenue throughout their tenure. Simply put, if drivers aren't staying with your company for at least 3 months, you're losing money.

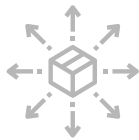
According to Farrell, it can cost as much as \$10,000 to replace a driver, which is an astounding number when you think that the average industry turnover rate is hovering near 100%. Carriers are bleeding money trying to fill these open spots, when they could focus on keeping drivers happy instead.

According to a Workhound survey, here are the top five trends in the trucking industry right now:



Equipment

A truck is a driver's home and the tools to do their job all at once. It pays off to invest in the right equipment, and it can also set your company apart from the competition. Top-of-the-line trucks can help increase driver retention by increasing job satisfaction.



Logistics

Companies, especially those in the logistics industry, cannot compromise mediocrity for speed. Quality logistics planning, scheduling, and mapping is a win/win for a carrier and for drivers because it makes a solid statement about the values of an organization.



People

For many, the people they work with make going to work every day bearable. For CDL drivers on the road every day, making these personal connections can be hard. Carriers must be able to create a company culture that transcends the four walls of an office and connects drivers across the country, no matter where the road takes them.



Pay

Interesting enough, compensation is a huge issue in the modern CDL trucking industry, and it is one that can drastically impact driver retention. Paying drivers on time – and paying them correctly for the right hours – can be a big differentiator for carriers. Paystubs and wages aren't always straightforward for drivers, and they want to work with companies who can deliver this experience.



Communication

Even though there are more digital communication channels, tools, and platforms in place than ever before, drivers are still craving more communication and transparency from parent organizations. Drivers appreciate when their companies communicate effectively and respectfully. They like making personal connections with dispatchers and driver managers who communicate with them frequently. There is a huge opportunity for carriers to capitalize on communication to retain more drivers.

What the above topics show us is that there is a tremendous amount of value in what carriers and recruiters can learn from drivers. Drivers are the backbone of the CDL trucking industry. They are the ones on the road every single day, and they are the ones having the experiences that recruiters are trying to optimize. As such, drivers should be the first place companies look when figuring out new retention and recruiting strategies, yet they are often one of the most overlooked groups.

Drivers are highly likely to have good ideas to help improve a trucking company, and they most definitely have ideas on things that can be changed to make it operate at a higher level. Recruiters must realize that drivers are constantly asking themselves, "Does my company have my back?" When drivers get frustrated, all they have to do is go online and find a new job. Instead, drivers should feel comfortable bringing these issues to their carriers to discuss.

So, why do drivers leave? They don't feel respected by their companies. They don't feel as though they have a voice that is heard. Drivers are literally on the road for a majority of their time, so the open-door policies that are so popular with other industries don't really work here. Drivers want to be heard, and they want to be valued.

This is why collecting driver feedback is so valuable. It's a way for carriers to show drivers that their input is valuable and that their comments are heard. **Collecting driver feedback can also be a great way to:**



Understand the challenges drivers are facing every day.



Address urgent issues or problems.



Double down on what is working well for your organization.



Praise and recognize staff that are helping drivers.



Gather insights and then act on these to improve operations.

Collecting feedback is only the first step, however. In order to be truly proactive when it comes to retention, companies should implement a feedback loop as part of their retention strategy.





Creating a Real-Time Feedback Loop

Working with a real-time feedback loop allows companies to be proactive rather than reactive. Collecting feedback from various sources – social media, in-person, through anonymous surveys, etc. – taking action on this feedback, and then communicating these actions back to drivers creates a routine in an organization.

Here are a few best practices to keep in mind when creating a real-time feedback loop in your organization:

1 Have the right people listening to the feedback. In order to make real change happen in an organization, the ones with the power to implement these changes need to be in the loop. This means leadership. If company leaders aren't buying in to driver feedback, then these comments are just falling on deaf ears. Bring together the people with the authority to make changes as part of your retention strategy team.

2 Know where to look. The CDL trucking industry is tightly knit, and this means that rumors and gossip spreads quickly. If there is a piece of negative feedback floating around out there, chances are drivers will know about it before you do. In order to truly dig up the most truthful, candid feedback, pay attention to social media, radios, in-person conversations, online forums, and more. Hold driver meetings and offer an online anonymous feedback portal to facilitate even more comments.

3 Take action. Asking for feedback and doing nothing is the most toxic thing you can do in business. Doing nothing after asking for suggestions tells drivers that you don't value their input or their ideas. Making changes doesn't have to be hard at first. Start with the small wins and do little

things that show that change is happening. While you're working on the bigger changes (which can be hard and messy), start with the smaller ideas.

4 Celebrate the positive feedback. The trucking industry can have a bad habit of focusing on and trying to fix what's broken. But you should also try to celebrate what's going well. Taking action on feedback but not telling your constituents what you did is the second-most toxic thing you can do in business. Even if your leadership team made a ton of changes but didn't tell anyone what you did, it's almost as if you didn't change anything at all.

Celebrating the action and closing the feedback loop is just as important as asking drivers for feedback in the first place. It shows drivers that you are listening, that you're working to get better, and that their feedback does matter.

Take [Marten Transport](#) for example. Drivers were requesting the option to bring their pets along in trucks, and Marten didn't really know where to start with implementing this new policy. Marten realized that this policy would help them recruit new drivers and retain the ones they have, so now the pet friendly policy is a huge differentiator for them in the industry.

How to Structure Retention Initiatives Within Your Organization

When it comes to recruiting and retaining CDL drivers, asking for feedback and actually taking action is key. But how can organizations actually make this happen? Just to be clear, change doesn't happen overnight. Feedback loops should be part of a larger retention initiative within your organization.

Here are 4 easy steps to structure a retention strategy with feedback at the center:

Step 1

Answer key questions up front

There are a few things your team needs to get out in the open before going too deep down the retention rabbit hole:

- Has leadership bought into this retention initiative? Having leadership on board will ensure that changes actually happen.
- Is the operations team involved? Operations, HR, and Recruiting are too interwoven for one to change without the others.
- What is your company structure? Decentralized organizations often have multiple locations and groups doing different things, while centralized organizations are more tight-knit.

Step 2

Dedicate resources to your retention initiative

Although retention should be a company-wide initiative, dedicated departments or resources should own this strategy to ensure things are getting done. This can be a single department, a cross-functional team made up of individuals from multiple departments, or even a single person, like a liaison or advocate, that works closely with other stakeholders across the organization.

Step 3

Know when to take action

Carriers should go in to feedback retention strategies with a game plan in place for addressing the issues that come up, because they will come up. From individual driver issues to the entire company to things that are impacting the success of the fleet itself, project leaders should have a good idea of how to tackle these issues.

Step 4

Create performance indicators

As you're going through these exercises, set up health risk alerts to indicate when drivers are at a high risk for leaving your organization. This could be something like being below-average in miles two weeks in a row or not submitting critical paperwork on time. Flagging these drivers for follow-up allows your team to be more proactive in collecting feedback instead of waiting around for issues to float to the surface.



Where Companies Thrive with Retention

On the other hand, when companies get it right with feedback retention strategies, it can really work wonders for both the morale of drivers as well as the overall company culture. Everyone, regardless of industry, wants to work for a company that values their input and wants to keep them around. Asking drivers what they want and what they think should change shows that carriers respect their presence.

You know your company is thriving with retention when:

- **You're celebrating positive comments.**

Recruiting and HR teams should try to respond to as many feedback comments as possible, both positive and negative. When a positive comment comes along, share it on social media and with the entire organization to celebrate the positivity.

- **Drivers and recruiters are both improving.**

A lot of driver feedback will probably be focused on confusion or misunderstandings, so carriers will have a chance to re-educate all sides of the business with new, clearer messaging. Coaching drivers on how to be successful shows them that you're dedicated to helping them grow personally and professionally.

- **You take your success on tour.**

Carriers and recruiters with larger organizations can go on-site with drivers across the country to thank people for their feedback and talk about how action is being taken as a direct result of these comments.

- **Drivers can see the changes taking place.**

Whether it's updated facilities, expanded compensation, or even stricter customer policies, drivers want to see changes happen.

How to Measure Retention ROI

In the CDL industry, things that get measured get managed. It's impossible to have a truly successful feedback retention strategy without putting some metrics in place to track your progress and make sure that things are progressing in the right direction.

SIX METRICS YOUR TEAM SHOULD START TRACKING NOW TO MEASURE RETENTION ROI

METRIC 1: 90-Day driver turnover average

The first 90 days statistically sees the highest turnover rates for carriers, which means retaining drivers longer than 90 days can be the first step towards long-term tenure. Carriers should try to decrease this number over time. Tracking your 90-day driver turnover average before and after you implement your retention initiatives will help you determine if your new process is making a difference.

METRIC 2: The number of urgent issues addressed

Staying on top of issues can be the difference between having a driver leave and keeping them on the road. Carriers should try to address issues as soon as they come up so that drivers don't get frustrated and leave. Track retention rates for specific drivers within 30 days after they submit an issue and then see if you can correlate the number of drivers staying with the number of issues that have been resolved.

At ACT, the team was able to retain 99% of drivers after proactively addressing their issues, responding to comments, and engaging with them after issues were filed.

METRIC 3: Average driver tenure

Unfortunately, some carriers are forced to measure this number in days because their turnover rates are so high. Carriers can start to see the long-term impact of feedback and retention initiatives by tracking driver tenure.

METRIC 4: Cost-per-net-added driver

While cost-per-hire doesn't necessarily measure retention, cost-per-net-added driver combines recruiting and retention into a single number. This is the total amount spent to grow a fleet in a given year. Simply put, recruiting away retention issues is not a long-term strategy.

METRIC 5: A/B testing new retention initiatives

While this is a more qualitative metric, A/B testing retention initiatives helps stakeholders know what will work and what will fall flat before rolling out a new strategy to a large group. Carriers can track retention rates for a control group and an impacted group to see which retention strategy will make the most difference in the long-term.

METRIC 6: The wins that tell a story

Another qualitative metric is the number of wins that highlight your brand. Knowing what is actually keeping drivers at your organization and sharing this information with other drivers can help create a brand reputation in the industry. Gather stories about tenured drivers who overcame make-or-break issues or highlight personal, 1:1 relationships between drivers and dispatchers to make these stories part of your overall brand identity.



Conclusion

As the CDL industry continues to slog through the driver shortage, the biggest competition to recruiters isn't other carriers but other opportunities outside of the trucking industry. This means that carriers must start appealing to drivers off-road as well as in the truck.

The best way to recruit new drivers is to keep the ones they have, and this means listening to their feedback.

Being proactive, leveraging as many feedback channels as possible, and actually taking action on this feedback can help close the loop on retention.

All too often, success happens when we step outside of our comfort zones. If carriers can embrace change, embrace the hard conversations, and be willing to measure success, drivers will be willing to stick around.



Building the ultimate CDL driver recruiting process

With the right processes and technology in place, this new era of CDL driver recruiting will bring opportunity and success for recruiters. If you want to take your marketing, recruiting, and retention processes to the next level, look no further. DriverReach is the modern solution for innovative CDL driver recruiters to deliver a driver-first approach to recruiting. Learn more – [request your personal demo today!](#)

About DriverReach

DriverReach's modern recruiting and compliance management system provides a better applicant experience and dramatically improves speed-to-hire. A mobile-friendly DOT application feeds directly into a full-service ATS with email and text functionality, streamlining the process of qualifying drivers so companies can Hire. Better. Faster. As an [American Trucking Association Corporate Partner](#) DriverReach is dedicated to improving the hiring process for drivers and carriers alike. For more information, visit driverreach.com.

You can learn more about how DriverReach is helping to usher in a new era of technology-backed CDL recruiting excellence [here](#).

