



Owner-Operator's Business
Association of Canada
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*...from the
director's chair*

Overturning turnover: Better recruiting = Better retention

I don't get it. Does the industry breathe a collective sigh of relief and think the driver turnover problem is under control when the American Trucking Associations (ATA) reports that driver turnover rates, many times the rate of other business sectors, remain at historically low levels?

As long as the numbers are below what the estimated average is at the time, do we think we're doing a good job? With turnover for large U.S. truckload fleets down from well over 100% a decade ago to somewhere in the 70s, perhaps a bit of celebration is not unwarranted. But still.

I'm not the only one who is alarmed at the seemingly blasé attitude by a large part of the industry about elevated turnover rates. The subject generates enough anxiety that articles are written and discussions are held on understanding driver turnover, and there are countless ideas, guides, strategies, tips, and programs put forth on how to manage it.

Happily, there is a growing realization that paying more attention to integrating new drivers into the company has a significant positive impact on turnover, and many fleets are developing onboarding processes, or what I call orientation on steroids, much to the chagrin of my HR guru friend who tried to explain the process of turning a good hire into a great employee.

But, she cautioned, the best onboarding programs start in the recruitment process. Sad to say, many fleets do a terrible job at

recruiting, not quite "getting it" that one way to avoid high turnover rates is to have an effective recruitment program, which is really where a good driver retention program begins.

I like to spend time in the recruiting pavilion at truck shows, asking recruiters if theirs is a good company to work for. Assuming I'm a driver looking for work, they give me the pitch: my favorite most appalling answers this year? When I asked about pay, I was told that within a few months, I could be making as much as a driver who had been on the job for 25 years. And with a wink, I was assured that the company doesn't use electronic logs. I told another company I was a newbie and had nightmares about getting out on the road and finding out I didn't like the job. "But that's the great thing about trucking," the recruiter enthused. "If you don't like driving, we can move you into training or dispatch."

Believe it or not, there are still companies out there that think sugarcoating the job is the way to attract drivers. Fostering unrealistic expectations among new hires is a surefire way to guarantee they aren't going to stick around long. Giving drivers a realistic view of what they're going to experience should go hand-in-hand with promoting the benefits of the job.

Personality assessments, long-standing tools in the white-collar recruiting arsenal, are increasingly being used in trucking as



Joanne
Ritchie:
OBAC
executive
director

fleets smarten up their hiring processes to find the best candidates for the job. Predictive analysis, as we call it these days, is an area of statistics that deals with mining data from a variety of sources and using it to predict trends and behavior patterns. Since such assessments measure personality factors linked to unsafe behaviors, which can lead to incidents and injuries on the road, the safety benefits and training opportunities are obvious.

But research has shown that certain personality traits can also foretell a person's likelihood of staying on the job or leaving, so predictive analytics has the potential to become a useful tool in combating high turnover rates.

There are hundreds of companies out there that specialize in collecting and analyzing the data that we provide as we go about our business in this wired world. They've reached the brilliant conclusion that employees who are genuinely happy with the work they are doing are much more productive and less likely to look for another job. Far be it from me to dump on big data, but if asked, most drivers would tell you the same thing. Engaging drivers in the process might give some insight into how they feel about their careers, surely a significant factor in lowering turnover rates. I'm just saying.