

# Speaking from Experience

Do you ever get to the point where nothing seems easy...when what looks like something that should be a "slam-dunk-gitter-done" deal gets caught up in deep, deep minutia? I had been feeling that way for some time and it was starting to wear on me. It all came to a head this past week at the Truckload Carriers Association's annual convention. During the Regulatory Committee meeting I gave what I thought was a passionate plea for support of the PTDI (Professional Truck Drivers Institute) curriculum to be recommended to the FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) as the standard for entry-level drivers in their proposed rulemaking that will be released some time this summer. I then spoke against a watered-down weak offering from the ATA (American Trucking Association) at the TCA Board of Director's meeting during the same convention. I received a solid thrashing from the opposition, the vote was something like 50-25 in favor of the watered-down version from ATA.

I am thoroughly convinced that our industry's 100% average turnover rate can be attributed, in large part, to the sub-standard driver training schools that exist in this industry. I believe in what the CTHRC (Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council) is trying to do with their Closing the Gap initiative. This program addresses the broad differences that exist in entry-level driver training across Canada. If successful, they would recommend to the government a consistent standard of entry-level driver training across Canada. Although I have been a critic of CTHRC in the past, if they can make this happen and be backed by a good curriculum such as PTDI and ensure school accountability, it will be applauded by this voice. We must eliminate sub-

standard entry-level driver training in this country. I don't want it to be over-regulated by the government but if this is the only way we can get rid of those parasites, so be it!



During the convention one of the general sessions had a panel of four award-winning drivers onstage and a moderator from the media asking them questions relating to some of the more controversial issues of these times. Interestingly, the panel of drivers was split 2-2 with regards to their opinion on the new log book rules in the U.S. One driver favoured the implementation of speed limiters while three were against it, with the same split against electronic onboard recorders. All, however, agreed that entry-level drivers do not receive enough training before they enter the industry. They also stated concerns over carriers' finishing programs for entry-level drivers; they felt that the programs weren't long enough, nor did the trainer have enough experience in many cases. All of these drivers had been with their current employers for many years and when asked why, they echoed the same answer in different words. They felt that they were valued and respected by their employer. Their employers asked for drivers' input and this input had an impact on the decisions the company made. Similarly, they all felt that the carriers they worked for put their drivers ahead of all else and are safety driven. Perhaps most importantly, each of them stated that they fully intended to retire at their current carrier. Any carrier reading this who has a turnover issue please go back to the top of this

## Get in the Game!

paragraph and re-read it as many times as it takes to set in. Then do something to help yourself and your drivers, please!

At the awards banquet I was proud once again to see three Canadian companies on the podium receiving TCA's National Fleet Safety awards. MacKinnon Transport, Robert Transport and Bison Transport were all on stage along with six US-based companies...all poised to see who the grand prize winner was to be in the large carrier (Over 25 Million Miles) category. For the second year running Bison Transport won the national fleet safety award. I'm not sure if any company has ever won this prestigious award two times in a row as Bison has now done. Congratulations to all of the winners...what a great goal for any company to aspire to!

Industry conventions have always been a source of inspiration for me for many reasons. Mainly, I have made many lifelong quality friendships at these events that I cherish. They are places where the issues are debated and they're debated for the most part by passionate, informed people. We're an industry that likes to eat our young for some reason and we beat each other up on a regular basis. While I'm not quite sure why this is, when I attend these functions I remind myself that these people and the companies they represent are at least in the game.

I am a proud member of the Ontario Trucking Association, the Canadian Transportation Alliance, the Truckload Carriers Association, the Professional Truck Drivers Institute and the North American Training and Management Institute. Do I agree with every position that each of these organizations takes? Not by a long shot. But I do appreciate the value that each of the above groups attempts to bring to this industry. Is your company in the game?

What do you think?

Feel free to drop me a note on this idea.

Safe driving!

Sincerely,  
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