

Speaking from Experience

Here's an interesting question for you...why become a truck driver? We're surrounded by so much negative news that some of us never appreciate what we do to put food on the table. I'm going to start a list of why this is a rewarding job and you are more than welcome to let me know some of your reasons for pounding the highway. My transportation career started with ten years on the road driving long-haul. While that was some time ago, I think they all still apply today:

1) The opportunity to see North America and be paid to do it. I realized long ago that this was an opportunity that not many get and I loved it. I was eighteen at the time I started my driving career and by the time I was in my early 20s I had seen most of North America and enjoyed each new destination.

2) Not having someone looking over your shoulder. This was a huge relief for me after doing two years of factory work. I never felt like I was getting anywhere when I punched a clock. I didn't like it, and it always felt like I was treading water.

3) After a few years I recognized the real career options that exist in this industry. Call it career path...call it what you want. If you're a person with some ambition, the driver's seat is a great way to propel yourself into many different careers in this industry. Most drivers would be amazed at how many of today's top fleets were started by one man with one truck. Operations is loaded with ex-drivers as are the safety and sales departments in most companies. Many of the industry's top trade suppliers have ex-drivers working for them. My good friend Chris Harris has recently accepted the challenge of chairing an industry group focused on career paths for the trucking industry.

Chris is a good man with a good head on his shoulders and this is going to lead to some exciting developments.



4) Trucking is a way of life. I am sure that many people hear about this industry's high turnover rates but in reality I believe, as many do, that the proper term is churn not turn. I believe that of those drivers who stick it out for more than a year, few of them leave the industry. I actually have made this a talking point when I speak to groups who are thinking of becoming drivers. I warn them that once this thing called trucking gets under your skin you'll be hooked and you won't be getting out anytime soon.

5) The people. I cannot believe the people I have met over the years. Along with the rouges and the scoundrels, I have met so many class acts who have taken the time to mentor me and show me their way. I have always been humbled by how generous this industry truly is and I am fortunate to have made close friends all over Canada and the United States. Believe it or not, trucking at its core is still run by people who started with one truck and a dream.

6) What you learn. I have seen and learned more about how raw materials and finished goods are moved through this economy than most people could only dream of. Sure, you might not appreciate this fact when you're waiting to load or unload, but I always got a charge out of finding out how things work and what people did where I picked up or delivered. What's the number one thing people like to talk

Why Pound the Pavement?

about most? Themselves! Try it sometime, but be careful... I asked too many questions once at a loading dock in London and ended up marrying the tow motor driver. I couldn't help myself; she was gorgeous!

7) Job Security. Sure, we have an aging work force...but guess what? So does every sector other than high tech. For years, high schools have pushed our kids into university instilling in them that anything less was a failure. Interestingly, our local community college's single-highest enrollment stream for the past number of years has been the universities. Why? Because in most cases today a university degree will get you butkiss. The world needs plumbers and carpenters

and truck drivers. If you want job security, we've got it in aces!

I'll end this chapter by asking you to take the time to send me your reasons for getting into this industry. I would love to talk to you about them and potentially publish some of what is sent to me.

Send your story to ray@otr.on.ca

I look forward to hearing from you!

Safe driving,

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