21 Best Practices to Recruit and Retain Your Drivers
Rim Yurkus, Founder of Strategic Programs, Inc., is a thought leader in developing the methodology for using data to increase retention in transportation.

He partners with all modes of trucking including truckload, bulk, intermodal and others. His company partners with industry leaders such as Schneider National, Gordon Trucking, Melton Truck Lines, and Marten Transport.

Maximizing human capital since 1988, Rim has been a frequent presenter at national conferences, has published numerous articles in trade publications.
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“If you’re lucky enough to find a guy with a lot of head and a lot of heart, he’s never going to come off the field...”

-Vince Lombardi, Head Coach
Greenbay Packers (1959-67)
Best Practice #1
Identify the demographics of your best drivers

Building a championship team starts with understanding your best drivers on a deeper level.

The more you know about them, the greater your advantage in attracting quality drivers to a culture where they fit in faster, and identify with your brand.

Personality Traits

- Patient
- Detail Oriented

Interests

- Music
- Sports
Understand what makes your best drivers tick

To identify the common characteristics of your best drivers, use a validated instrument like the ProScan® Survey to accurately assess a driver’s basic and preferred work style.

ProScan® examines combinations of specific traits that identify how a person works most effectively, and focuses on strengths and motivators that will help to create an environment that reduces employee stress, while improving energy and morale.

For your own ProScan® and see its accuracy, click here.
Best Practice #2
Plan how to attract the best drivers

Gaining a deep understanding of your best drivers will help you develop a strategy to get the right message to the right drivers.

✓ Where are they?
✓ What do they read?
✓ What & who do they listen to?
✓ What do they watch?
✓ Which competitors have the best drivers and how do they retain them?
Google is replacing the phone book and other traditional media.

There are 201,000 monthly Google searches in the US for “truck driving jobs”.

Top 5 states with the highest number of searches for trucking jobs:
1. Mississippi
2. Alabama
3. Arkansas
4. Georgia
5. Tennessee

To view the on-demand webinar, “Innovative Strategies to Recruit Drivers” click here.
Our analysis of exit data from more than 70,000 drivers shows that early turnover occurs when there is a gap job in expectations and reality. It gives new hires the perception that you are not honest.

Make only those promises you can keep, and learn from your best drivers:

• What keeps them on the job?
• What exceeded their expectations?
• What do you do better than your competitors?
The top trucking companies use our research methodology and reporting capabilities to get the most actionable data and make the best business decisions.

The high scores from this High-Low Table will give you the insight to position the job opportunity effectively and leverage your strengths.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Score</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent Favorable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>Compensation &amp; Benefits</td>
<td>(29) The company's benefits program provided for my needs</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>Coworkers</td>
<td>(9) My coworkers were capable of doing the work that needed to be done</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>(5) I clearly understood what was expected of me in my position</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>Climate &amp; Morale</td>
<td>(1) I was proud to work for the company</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>Training &amp; Career</td>
<td>(22) I received adequate training to do my job well</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Best Practice #4
Customize the job opportunity

Strategic Programs clients experience success when they customize configurations for drivers who have different values.

How can you customize the job opportunity for those who want more home time?

What about drivers who want a regular schedule?

Segmenting your drivers by their preferences will help you provide the flexibility they desire.
“Onboarding your new drivers correctly is like getting a truck moving by starting in the right gear.”

-Rim Yurkus, CEO of Strategic Programs, Inc.
One of the top reasons for driver turnover the first 6 months is “Immediate Supervisor”.

You can put a face to the job by introducing your drivers to your Fleet Managers prior to orientation, in person or by phone.

Not only does it help to break the ice before orientation—it helps to build the relationship.
Trucking companies use Strategic Programs data to drill down and identify **specific fleet managers** who have the greatest development opportunity.

That, combined with learning the specific reasons for turnover, allows leadership to quickly address *red flags* and make improvements **before** problems escalate.
Best Practice #6
Manage first impressions with Effective onboarding

Most new hires decide within the first 72 hours whether they will be with you for a long time. The best trucking companies recognize that a new driver’s first impression is critical to retention.

Here are a few tips to improve their onboarding experience:

- Provide a warm welcome. If you send pre-arrival materials, include hats, T-shirts or other company logo branded symbols to produce a feeling of belonging.

- Make sure the first 24 hours reflects professionalism, cleanliness, user-friendliness, and driver appreciation.
How effective is your onboarding process in increasing short-term retention, reducing time to productivity, and improving customer satisfaction?

With the *New Hire Check-in*, you can gain valuable feedback from new drivers and show them that their opinions are valued:

- Measure the effectiveness of orientation and training
- Identify the difference in overall engagement scores between new hires who are likely to stay and leave
- Get candid, objective feedback to identify gaps

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Compensation is one of the top reasons for early turnover, and a good indicator that there is a disconnect between a driver’s expectations and experiences.

The most successful trucking companies build trust with their drivers from the start by setting clear expectations, i.e.:

- List the company’s expectations of drivers.
- Itemize drivers’ expectations that the company will meet (rate of pay, average number of miles, policies for various eventualities).
- Include the driver’s family whenever possible.
- Put the expectations from both sides in writing.
- Get a personal commitment to a minimum period of time.
Best Practice #8
Set appointments with every department

When new drivers are able to meet personnel in other departments, it helps them build rapport and feel like they are part of the team.

It is also a good opportunity to conduct an expectations exchange between drivers and other departments. Think of this as part of their integration vs. orientation.
Two good driver traits are **patience and conformity**. Drivers like to have information ahead of time, and know the learning objectives so that they have time process it.

This allows you to link the learning objectives of your orientation to the strategic initiatives of the onboarding process.
Best Practice #10
Have upper management/owners meet new drivers during orientation

Have the Owner, President, or top leaders meet with the new driver to share history, folklore, and organizational values.

A few minutes of their time will go a long way in establishing trust with a new driver.

At the very least, an inspirational welcome letter signed by the President of your company will make new drivers feel special.
Best Practice #11
Assign a buddy or mentor

Having a go-to person during the onboarding process helps new drivers gain a better understanding of the culture, and provides helpful tips on how they can succeed with your company.

Be sure to assign mentors who are positive role models.
Setting up a Mentoring Program

While it may seem simple, implementing a mentoring program requires a lot of thought and planning in order to maximize its effectiveness. Otherwise, it can be a waste of time.

Unlike the standard program, where mentors and mentees sit through training and receive a booklet, you can design your program based on our Strategic Mentoring Program.

For more information about the Strategic Mentoring Program, click here.
“All organizations say routinely ‘People are our greatest asset’. Yet few practice what they preach, let alone truly believe it.”

-Peter Drucker, Author
Managing in a Time of Great Change
Best Practice #12
Establish a retention budget

If filling a vacancy costs an average of $5,000 per new driver, a company with 1,000 drivers and 100% turnover would spend $5 million a year to fill vacancies.

The best trucking companies are proactive and create a retention budget as part of their retention strategy.

They invest in various retention solutions, i.e.:

- Employee recognition and awards
- Bonuses
- Special employee events

Outsourcing exit interviews and retention
The Strategic TurnOver Program™ conducts exit interviews and surveys, for retention analysis, and pinpoints specific areas to target your retention dollars. Click here to learn more
Best Practice #13
Establish an open door policy

The low scores in our Agreement Index of industry normative data for drivers shows why it is important to establish an open door policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>Training &amp; Career Development</td>
<td>(25) The company provided me with opportunities to grow professionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>(6) My job made full use of my skills and abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>(23) Forums were provided where employees could voice concerns about the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>(7) I liked the type of work I did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>Compensation &amp; Benefits</td>
<td>(30) I was paid fairly for the work that I did</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having a forum where drivers’ opinions can be heard can have a positive impact on retention.

Fleet Managers who interact with your drivers the most may need help in this area. Training programs such as Strategic Programs [Fleet Manager Optimization Program](#) teaches active listening, and establish an open door policy, as well as other valuable management practices.

This training helps Fleet Managers to practice new skills on the job, for change that is sustainable over time.
The more you contact new drivers, the more opportunities you have to listen to their challenges or concerns, take action, and establish trust.

Have someone meet with each driver weekly for the first month, then monthly or check-ins on how well your mutual expectations are being met. Do this for at least the first year, or for a time period that you have identified as optimal to improve retention.
Best Practice #15
Grade your drivers

“If you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”
-Peter Drucker, Author
Managing in a Time of Great Change

Tracking your drivers’ metrics will help you identify your drivers’ levels of performance so that Fleet Managers can know how to help them improve.

These are key driver metrics:

• CSA Scores
• Safety Records
• On-time Performance
• MPG
• Customer Satisfaction Scores
Best Practice #16
Offer online learning

Daniel Pink, in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, names mastery as one of the key motivators. We all strive for continuous improvement in what we do.

Some drivers have earned college degrees while driving. Even if a college education is not the goal, some drivers need to continue learning and growing.
Why would you care about drivers who have left? The best companies conduct interviews or surveys to learn why good drivers leave.

The most important questions that an exit analysis program helps to uncover are:

- How are we not meeting expectations?
- What are the key triggers for disengagement?
- What can we do to solve the problem?
- How can the problem be corrected?

The answers to these questions can also be found in our Driver Engagement Surveys, but that picture is diluted by the highly engaged drivers. To put disengagement into focus, you need to learn from the drivers you lost.
Some key considerations for conducting an exit analysis program include:

- Will you get high response rates?
- Will you get candid responses?
- Can you rely on your data to make critical decisions?

Strategic TurnOver Program™ is an exit analysis program that has been trusted by the best trucking companies for reliable and actionable data.

It helps to uncover the brutal facts as to why your best drivers leave, and it will help you gain insight into what you can do about it.

Preventable Exit Reasons
Owner Operators \ Independent Contractors

- Compensation/ Miles
- Equipment/Maintenance
- Home Time
- Driver Manager/ Contract Advisor
- Policies and Procedures
- Fuel Surcharge/Prices
- Configuration of Team/Solo
- Career Opportunity
- Route/Change of Status
- Communication
- Politics/Dishonesty
- Management/Leadership
- Recruiter/Recruiting Process
- Recognition/Appreciation
- Route/Change of Status
- Independent Contractors
One of the ways that trucking companies address the driver shortage is to offer their best drivers who have left an invitation to come back.

Our “Likely to Return” client reports have shown that there are drivers who would be willing to return to the company. Without an invitation, many of them don’t consider it an option.

How do you know which drivers are willing to come back? Find out how our clients have been able to re-hire former drivers. Click here
Best Practice #19
Provide Feedback Opportunities

Provide formal and informal feedback opportunities to always know what is going on with your drivers.

One of the greatest benefits of a periodic driver engagement survey is to provide formal feedback opportunities. You can also work with your fleet managers to provide informal opportunities.
In his best-selling book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey introduced the idea of “Emotional Bank Accounts.”

Providing ongoing displays of appreciation and offering positive reinforcement helps you make deposits into your drivers’ emotional bank account.

This allows you to create a positive balance in the account, which reflects the amount of trust in your relationship.

Some of our clients have created special recognition designations, such as “Road Knight.”
Best Practice #21
Provide leadership training

High-performing organizations are relentless in their pursuit of continuous learning. The best trucking companies provide leadership training to their Executive Team down to the Fleet Managers.

Some of the leadership competencies that you may want to incorporate into your training include:

- Communication skills
- Decision-making skills
- Business acumen
- Financial acumen
- Conflict resolution

Need help in developing a competency model? [We can help.]
21 Best Practices Check List

- Identify demographics of your best drivers
- Plan how to attract the best drivers
- Position the job opportunity to leverage strengths
- Customize the job opportunity
- Introduce the Fleet Manager before orientation
- Manage first impressions with effective onboarding
- Conduct an expectations exchange
- Set appointments with every department
- Communicate learning objectives
- Have upper management/owners meet new drivers
- Assign a buddy or mentor
- Establish a retention budget
- Establish an open door policy
- Have regular new driver check-ins
- Grade your drivers
- Offer online learning
- Conduct an exit analysis program
- Offer the best drivers a return ticket
- Provide feedback opportunities
- Continuously express your appreciation
- Provide leadership training
To learn more about our assessment programs to measure driver recruiting and retention, please email us at info@strategicprogramsinc.com

Or click here