

FIVE WAYS TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP YOU RETAIN DRIVERS

Most truck-driver employees don't stay with the same company long enough to celebrate a work anniversary. Nearly one-third of drivers quit within 90 days of starting a new job, and half don't make it to the six-month mark. People just starting their career as a truck driver have the highest turnover rates.

Given the driver shortage (more than 70,000 empty seats projected by the end of this year), the small pool of qualified applicants and the cost of replacing one driver—\$9,000, according to the American Trucking Associations—fleets need to use every tool at their disposal to retain their hires.

Technology is emerging as a powerful instrument to employ against the top retention obstacles, such as poor hiring choices, lengthy orientation meetings, mismatched job expectations and quality-of-life issues.

As long as the driver labor market remains tight—and that's almost guaranteed for the foreseeable future—competition will be fierce, and unhappy employees will have plenty of options. Fleets that build loyalty through technology and other means will continue reaping the rewards of the industry's lowest turnover rates. Here are five strategies for using technology to improve driver-retention rates:



DIGITIZE YOUR RECRUITING PROCESS AND ANALYZE THE DATA TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL-HIRE PROFILE

Recruiters can ditch paper forms, spreadsheets and email in favor of online applications tied to software that automatically disqualifies applicants who don't meet minimum standards. Applications from qualified drivers are delivered to recruiters' computers, and the software guides them through the hiring steps, almost all of which are completed digitally. This speeds the process and keeps drivers in the communication loop; they can log in and check application status at any time. Recruiting information is retained when a driver is hired, and if he quits, a manager can mark in the system whether he's eligible for rehire. You can work with your software provider to identify traits of drivers who perform well long term, then target marketing efforts toward individuals with these characteristics.

SHORTEN ORIENTATION MEETINGS WITH ONLINE TRAINING

According to a driver survey by Conversion Interactive Agency, drivers dislike orientation meetings more than anything else related to changing jobs. Several companies, including Conversion, offer online training modules covering topics such as safety and compliance. Modules usually contain videos and test questions. Some programs allow instructors to see drivers' progress so they can assist, if needed, and learn about topics to focus on during in-person training. Systems also can deliver HR forms for drivers to fill out before arriving at the office. Drivers can complete online training while working for another company or over a weekend before beginning work, saving you downtime and money and significantly condensing an experience drivers find distasteful.

GET THROUGH THE CRITICAL FIRST MONTHS WITH HELP FROM THIRD-PARTY SURVEYS

The leading cause of early driver turnover is mismatched job expectations. If drivers think pay, home time, equipment and routes aren't what they signed up for, they begin to feel your company doesn't care about them. Firms, including Strategic Programs and Stay Metrics, offer third-party driver surveys that can detect mismatched job expectations and other driver concerns. You get email alerts so you and the employee can discuss disconnects.

MAKE DRIVERS FEEL AT HOME

High driver turnover and the driver shortage is driven, to a large extent, by the poor quality of life many drivers experience. The truck cab becomes their home, so anything you can do to improve that environment helps. Drivers are grateful when employers equip cabs with amenities, such as refrigerators and microwaves, and satellite TV has finally become a viable option. While most drivers can access the Internet on their own, viewing Netflix on a smartphone isn't the same as holding a remote and watching a sports game in real time. [Click here](#) to view a *Commercial Carrier Journal* photo gallery of satellite TV options for fleets.

INVEST IN EQUIPMENT THAT INCREASES SAFETY AND MAKES DRIVERS' LIVES EASIER

This includes technology you spec on your trucks and use to manage your fleet. Electronic-logging devices, telematics, lane-departure-warning systems, collision-avoidance systems and adaptive cruise control are likely to hook new employees. Automatic transmissions make driving less fatiguing and stressful, and can shorten the learning curve for younger drivers.