



Key Techniques

to Find & Retain the Next Generation of Drivers

**Chapter Two:
Strategies to Decrease Driver Turnover**



Continuation of Three-Part eBook Series

Chapter One “3 Step Process to Increase Your Driver Count ” explained the three basic steps to help increase the size of your fleet. **Chapter Two**, “Strategies to Decrease Driver Turnover” reviews key retention processes that may help stem driver attrition. **Chapter Three**, “How to Attract Millennials for Trucking Jobs” will provide insight into what Millennials value and a game plan to make trucking careers attractive.

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The Costs of Driver Turnover

Driver turnover is an ongoing problem that is now affecting all types of fleets in the industry and is expected to get worse. Unfortunately, you know firsthand the time and effort it takes to recruit, screen and onboard your drivers. So, it only makes sense to do everything possible to retain your existing employees.

This eBook is divided into eight categories and provides a checklist of **75 tactics and strategies** to help increase driver retention. AvatarFleet's Founder, Mark G. Gardner developed these key techniques more than 30 years ago while working at Ryder P.I.E., and then further refined them while consulting with various trucking companies. His creative solutions have helped more than three thousand transportation companies and one million professional drivers.

You may not have the time, budget or resources to do all 75, so **prioritize what makes the biggest impact** with the least amount of effort. First, calculate how much bad driver turnover costs you. The Upper Great Plains Institute paper: *The Costs of Truckload Driver Turnover* is a good resource to help you calculate the cost if you need help.

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Once you have an idea of the cost of driver turnover to your business, you can then allocate that cost or a portion thereof to invest in your drivers. Consider distributing your budget among the following eight areas:





75 Strategies to Help Increase Driver Retention

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Make a selection **beside the ideas** that you would like your company to implement.



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Culture: Establish a Driver-Centric Culture from the Top Down

Culture

Make driver retention a **key element** of the corporate strategic plan.

Assign driver retention performance to the **highest possible executive** in the company (e.g. President, VP Ops, etc.).

Analyze turnover data by: age, location, length of haul, type of vehicle, length of service, tenure, experience, CSA scores and other metrics you deem pertinent to your business. Identify patterns and act on trends.

Set **retention performance goals**, based on measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPI), and have it be a significant portion of the Director of Driver Retention's compensation. Provide strong weekly communications and daily follow-up.

Use **consistent, visual and vocal** support for driver retention from top management.

Develop and fill the position Director of Driver Retention. Communicate why you're doing this to the entire organization to show it's a priority. Make it clear the level of authority you're assigning this position.

Institute and enforce a policy that **no one should ever ask** a driver to do something illegal. **Enforce it. Post it. Live it.**

- Demonstrate commitment by firing any dispatcher who knowingly asks/requires a driver to do anything illegal.
- Once this is in place, promote it to all drivers as the new way of life at the company.

Culture (Continued)

Quit doing business with surly, unpleasant and nasty shippers/customers. Frequently communicate with all drivers that your company **will not tolerate** mistreatment and encourage them to report any instances. Never allow a customer to abuse a driver—verbally, or through delays or work assignments.

Be honest with all your drivers. Never lie to a driver about anything. Executives set the tone for company values and should hold people accountable.

Never promise **what can't be done**. Promises are inadvertently broken every day. Perception is reality. Think twice before you promise anything.

Get rid of the “driver’s window”—drivers should have **free access** to the entire office staff. Locking them out sends the message they are second-class citizens that you don’t trust.

Have an **open door policy** and be sure it is adequately communicated to all employees and drivers. Follow up on a regular basis to ensure it is actually being used.

Implement fair and just policies and procedures for dealing with **drivers as human beings**. Drivers know if you treat them like they’re replaceable.

Stop anyone from uttering “Our drivers are our most important asset.”
Assets are property. **Drivers are people.**

Allow **riders** (some restrictions may apply).

Allow **pets** (some restrictions may apply).



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**Recruiting & Hiring:
Don't Hire Your Problems
Just Because You Are Desperate**

Recruiting & Hiring

Implement a recruiter **bonus plan**, based on long-term driver retention.

Evaluate values, motivation and personality of potential drivers to predict their:



Use behavioral assessments over time to **validate** the propensity-to-turnover construct.

Provide **realistic job previews** prior to hire, followed by self-assessment survey.

Tell the complete truth. **Never create false expectations** or unfounded hope with a driver applicant. This applies to advertisements and any comments made by recruiters.

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Alignment:
Get Everyone on the Same Page

Alignment

Conduct comprehensive **new driver orientation** / alignment processes. Comprehensive onboarding generally should last more than two days—it's an on-going process that extends the first year of employment.

Simplify paperwork and documentation. Use **technology to automate** paperwork during orientation so you can spend time acclimating drivers to your culture.

Ask new drivers when hired about **their expectations**. Don't allow misconceptions to fester.

Develop a one-page Culture Contract detailing **shared expectations**, have it signed by the driver and dispatcher. Include "Company Values" on the top and on the bottom include "Driver's Expectations of Dispatcher" and "Dispatcher's Expectations of Driver" with bullet points under each.

Start new driver survey/assessments to identify any **early-stage misconceptions** and correct them.

Assign new drivers a **mentor**.

Provide your driver with **multiple personal points of contact** at time of hire, rather than handing them off to the next person in line.

Conduct third-party exit interviews, followed by **trending analysis and action plans** and tactics to correct any issues discovered.



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Engagement: You Can't Impact Turnover without Input from the Front Lines

Engagement

Form a Driver Council where the members are **elected by their peers**. Give the head of the Driver's Council a seat at every strategic meeting. Meet monthly/quarterly to discuss and take action when ideas are warranted about:

Equipment
Routes & Lanes
Quality of Work Life

Rules & Procedures
Compliance
Driver Advertising/Recruiting

Develop an **internal auditing system** managed by a Driver Liaison to uncover points of friction.

Implement a formalized, yet easy-to-use system to ask drivers for their **opinions and ideas**.

Establish direct, weekly communication with drivers on quality of work life (QWL) issues. **Take a weekly pulse** using three to five survey questions. Have your Driver Liaison call at least 30 drivers per week. Act on results.

Personalize tractors with names, initials or airbrushed artwork.

Follow a careful implementation schedule when **instituting any change** (especially new technologies). Provide ample communication, hand-holding and support. Give drivers a single point of contact for help. Conduct surveys and form focus groups before, during and after implementation.

Provide a 24-hour drivers' hotline where they can **vent, voice concerns, get a sympathetic ear**.

Give quarterly **gift cards** to family.

Offer **spouse's clubs** (books or other social activity groups).



Appreciation:
Show Drivers You Care

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Appreciation

Create a **workout facility** for your employees. Executives and managers should work out with drivers and employees—be visible.

Host quarterly driver appreciation events (e.g. cookouts, outings to a theme park or zoo, pot-luck parties, golf outings, fishing tournaments, car shows, craft shows, etc.).

Encourage their families to attend.

Give employee appreciation gifts to **reward good behavior** that impact KPI.

Provide **free emergency assistance** for any spouse in need, while the driver is away (plumber, driver for errands, etc.)

Offer **social activities** for drivers' children—groups, clubs, sports teams.

Set-up optional **tutoring/mentoring services** for drivers' children.

Provide drivers with **pre-loaded tablets** for work and pleasure on the road.

Include access to a driver portal for company updates, training and route planning.

Ensure that every new driver's truck is **detailed-clean** and in perfect working condition.

Send **annual anniversary card** that includes a gift for the driver.

Hand out holiday cards with **small gift**.

Schedule **random appreciation calls** to drivers throughout the year.

Mail **birthday cards** to drivers (with gift or paid day off).

Purchase family/ spouse **gifts for longevity** or (but not and) performance metrics.



Pay & Benefits:
Keep It Simple

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Pay & Benefits

Simplify pay systems and make them easy to understand.

Invest more hours explaining and answering questions.

Treat driver pay and accuracy with **respect**.

Provide local payroll managers/clerks with **ample education** on why and how drivers are paid. Also, provide them with ample education and training on soft skills, especially empathetic listening, building trust, and conflict resolution (triangulation) strategies.

Develop individual **reward programs**.

Start **team reward programs**.

Implement **fair pay** systems, especially covering wait time, breakdown, missed load assignments, etc.

Offer **guaranteed** weekly minimum pay (comes with specific agreed-upon performance criteria)

Arrange **golden handcuffs**—bonus plans that vest at dates in the future (e.g.: three months out).

Pay for **lumpers**.

Enforce detention charges **quickly and consistently**.

Conduct comparative pay analysis with **competing carriers** to ensure external equity.

Compare your pay to other job alternatives outside of trucking with **similar pay scales**.

Define and clearly communicate the **value of your benefits**:
what drivers will lose if they leave.



Training:
**Professionals Want
to Improve their Craft**

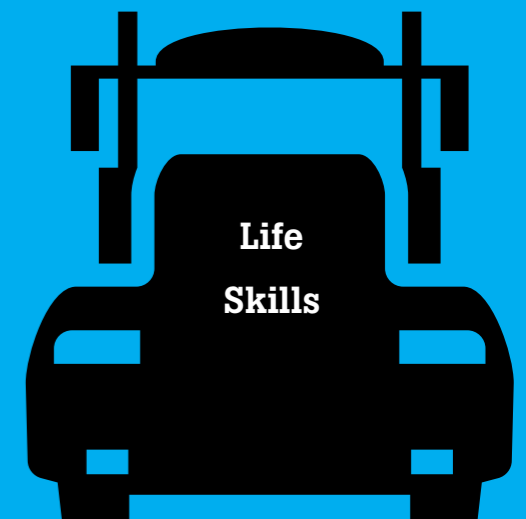
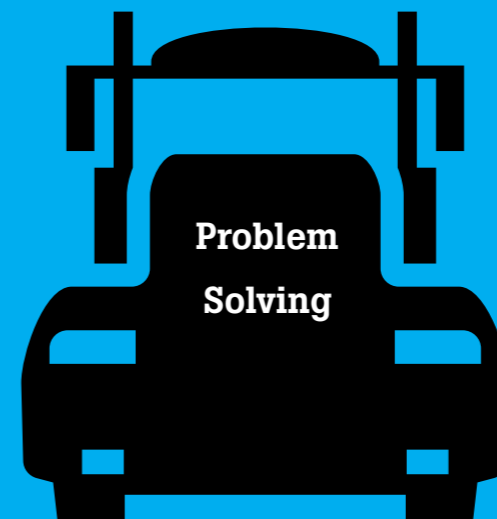
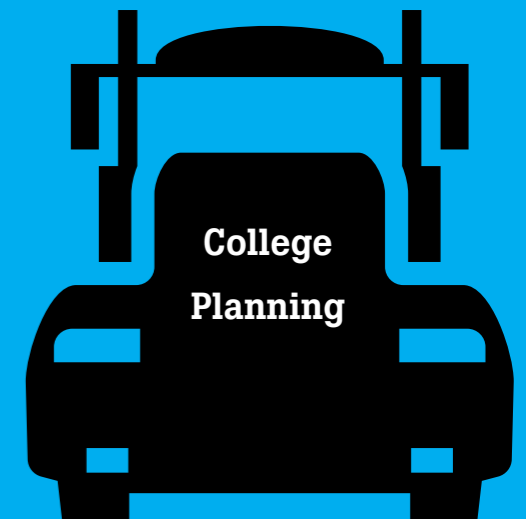
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Training

Provide effective, **behaviorally-based driver education and training** at time of new-hire and on a regular schedule once the driver is in service. Professional drivers want to master their craft. If it's done right—they'll appreciate you for it. Don't use boring videos; make the session interactive and engaging.

Develop a lending library of **audio-based educational materials** that drivers can listen to while on the road—not necessarily directly related to trucking.

Offer drivers "outcome-based" **educational opportunities** on vital subjects such as:

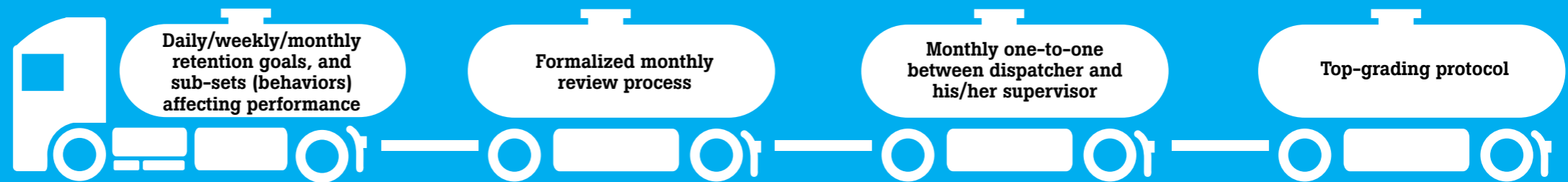




Dispatch:
The Face of Your Company to Drivers

Dispatch

Create a Dispatcher (Fleet Manager/Driver Manager) Performance Management System



Implement a comprehensive **dispatcher development process** that enhances planning, problem-solving and soft skills.

Create a **profiling system** that identifies drivers who are potential flight risks. Develop an action plan for these drivers.

Utilize an objective and transparent **load assignment system** to create fairness, as well as the perception of fairness, among all drivers.

Assign drivers to **one**, and only one, dispatcher.

= Develop team **learning moments**. When a dispatcher loses a driver, have him/her complete a full report about the driver—previous employment, strengths/weaknesses, preferences, reason for leaving, etc. During weekly management meetings, dispatchers will provide an overview to the team on departed drivers. Managers will use these sessions as a “learning moment” to coach the team.

Conduct a thorough **job analysis**, right size driver boards to dispatchers.

Review and adjust the number, personality and capability of dispatchers to drivers.

Provide dispatchers with the **top five reasons** why drivers leave, and what they can say or do to help avoid losing good drivers. Require that they document conversations and report outcomes weekly.

Review the boxes that you checked. Forecast the bottom-line impact each will have on driver retention. Then calculate how much time and money each one will take to implement.

Prioritize. Implement. Measure. Adjust.
And always remember to:
Love Safe Drivers.

Special thanks to AvatarFleet for providing content for this eBook.

About AvatarFleet

AvatarFleet's mission is to help companies keep their trucks full with professional, safe drivers. Trucking companies use their innovative products and services to Recruit, Hire, Train and Retain safe drivers. AvatarFleet provides an Applicant Tracking System with behavioral assessments, a complete Driver and Truck Compliance Management System, Professional Safe Driver Training Courses and customized Recruiting and Retention services.

About HireRight

HireRight offers on-demand employment background checks, drug and health screening, and electronic Form I-9 and E-Verify solutions. Many companies, including more than 9,500 transportation organizations trust HireRight because we deliver customer-focused solutions that provide greater efficiency and faster results.

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