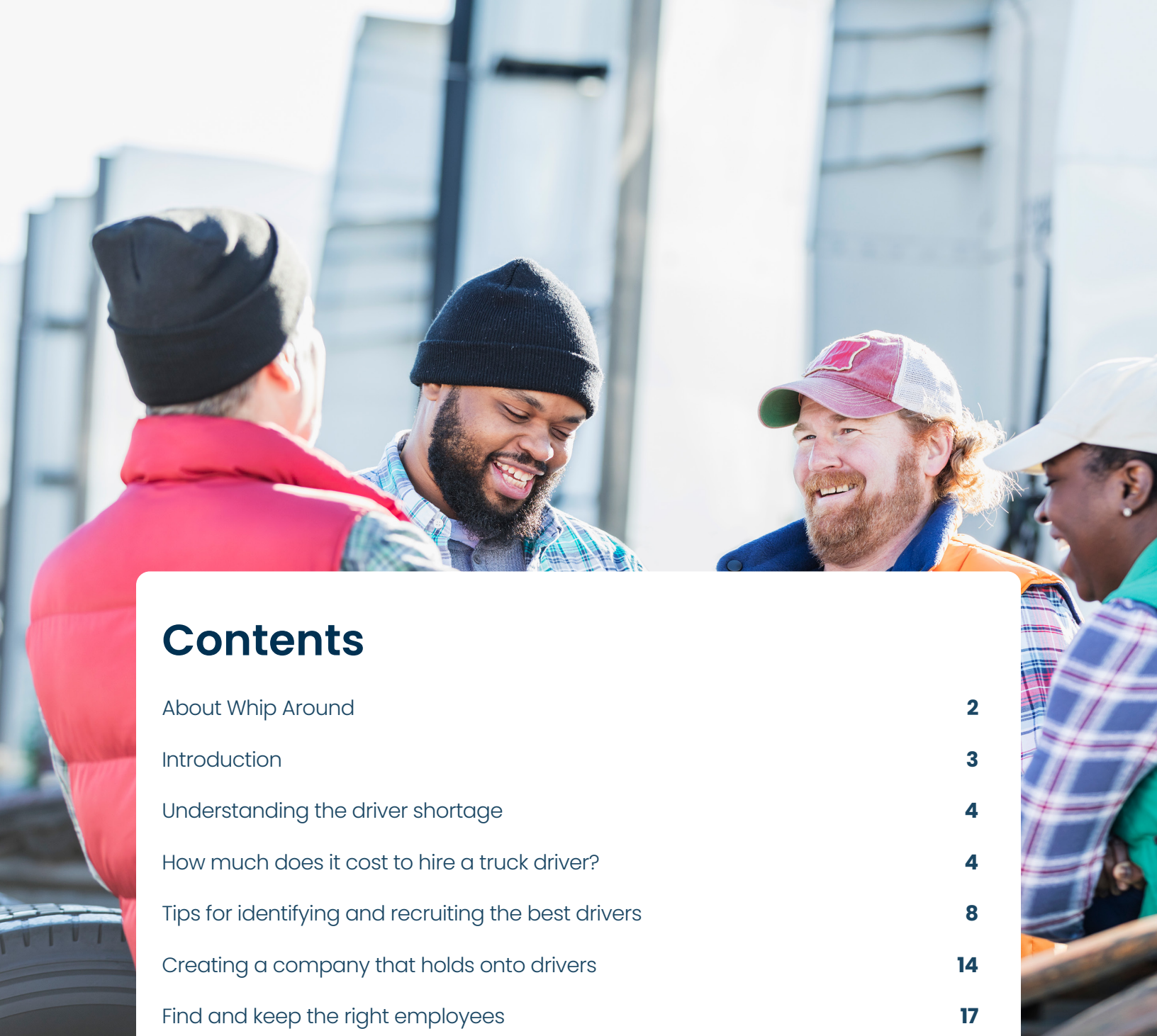




How to survive the driver shortage

Identifying, recruiting, and retaining excellent drivers



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About Whip Around

Whip Around is a fleet inspection and maintenance platform helping fleet managers, drivers, and mechanics keep their fleets running smoothly and safely. With Whip Around's DOT-compliant software, you can efficiently manage

vehicle and asset inspections, create and track work orders, automatically schedule preventative maintenance, and reference detailed fleet and asset data in real time.

Visit our website to learn more: whiparound.com



Introduction

The commercial driver shortage is a [well-documented phenomenon](#) impacting many industries, from trucking to transportation. The United States trucking industry has been particularly affected since 68% of all freight is moved on the country's highways. The driver shortage has led to shipping delays, increased supplier costs, and increased consumer pricing.

But it isn't simply a problem in the United States. The shortage has also affected other countries, like [Canada](#), the [United Kingdom](#), [Mexico](#), and [Germany](#).

To turn this trend around, many equipment, workforce, economic, and regulatory practices must be addressed. In the meantime, industries that rely on drivers need a plan to find, recruit, and maintain their workforce so that their businesses can thrive.

While this eBook focuses on helping trucking companies find and keep drivers, many principles can be applied to waste management, delivery, construction and transportation services organizations feeling the same workforce pressures.

Understanding the driver shortage

In order to improve driver acquisition and retention, it's critical to understand some of the issues behind the shortage. We need to have a grasp of the costs related to hiring and the current turnover rate. We should look at the current driving force and identify some underrepresented groups that could quickly improve driver recruitment.

We also want to examine some of the reasons drivers offer for leaving their current positions (or even the industry).

The cost of driver turnover

Upper Plains Transportation Institute studied 15 carriers with fleet sizes ranging from 32 to 9,463 trucks. They discovered that the average cost per hire was \$8,234, with individual fleets experiencing costs ranging from \$2,243 to \$20,729.

TruckingInfo.com says this about 2022's turnover rate: *"Turnover for large truckload carriers (with more than \$30 million in revenue) fell nine points from 90 to 78%. It's now 10 points lower than it was during the same quarter in 2017. Meanwhile, the turnover rate for small carriers rose five points to 77%.*

For the first time in the history of the National Private Truck Council's annual benchmarking survey, driver turnover eclipsed the 20% barrier, coming in at 22.5% in 2021. In the previous year's survey, driver turnover fell to 15.8%, nearly three full percentage points

down from 2019's turnover rate. When medium-duty operations, which average 44% annual turnover, are removed from the tally, average annual turnover falls by a point. To keep things in perspective, turnover has averaged 14.25% over the 15-year history of the survey."

High turnover costs are based on factors such as equipment and maintenance issues, driver compensation, advertising, recruitment, lost productivity, and training. No matter how efficient your recruiting process is, hiring is expensive. The health of your business will rely on your company's ability to retain the drivers you have.

Retaining drivers reduces your hiring costs, and if done well, it could represent a competitive advantage, both in terms of cost savings and talent acquisition and retention.

6 common reasons drivers quit

When considering hiring and retention rates, we need to wrestle with why drivers move on. The better you identify the holes in your staffing, the better you'll be at patching them up.

Here are some top reasons drivers move to other companies or leave the profession entirely.

1. Equipment Issues

According to the Conversion Interactive Agency and People. Data. Analytics. (PDA) Q1 2023 [Driver Recruiting & Retention Data Report](#), equipment problems was the most reported issue for drivers in Q1. Not only do equipment issues lead to downtime and reduced driver pay (whether real or perceived), they reflect poorly on your company and can negatively impact your reputation in the driver community.

2. Dissatisfaction with compensation

As in any profession, there isn't a lot of incentive to stay with a company that underpays, which is likely why this issue came in at #2 in the aforementioned report. If a driver can earn a substantial increase by moving to another company, why wouldn't they? A recent article published in the [Research in Transportation Economics Journal](#) found that just a six-percent increase in pay could be enough to entice drivers to stay.

3. Company culture and operations

Many drivers get fed up with the tension with supervisors, dispatch, mechanics, and other drivers. At many companies, drivers feel unappreciated and frustrated by a lack of clear communication with their managers and colleagues. Communication and respect go hand in hand to many drivers. To address this, businesses can invest in company-wide interpersonal training, build a responsible human resource team to manage conflicts, and focus on fostering a positive, transparent company culture.

4. Time away from home

For many long-haul drivers, time away from family and friends can be difficult. As we'll address later, it's critical to establish clear expectations during the hiring process. But even then, it's important to recognize that driver sentiments about being away so often can change over time and require ongoing monitoring.

5. Misaligned role expectations

A number of drivers have had experiences where recruitment promises didn't align with reality. It's critical that companies don't oversell what they can offer to get drivers to sign on the dotted line. It's also important to prioritize opportunities for advancement, which can require some creativity from management. This might mean offering bonuses and/or better routes to senior drivers, or moving drivers into training/advisory positions.

6. Health concerns

An alarming study published in the [American Journal of Industrial Medicine](#) found that 69 percent of long-haul truckers surveyed were obese, and 17 percent were morbidly obese. And more than half (51 percent) were cigarette smokers, which is an alarming statistic compared to the 19 percent of smokers in the general population. These issues can lead to truckers leaving the workforce sooner than expected because of poor health. Finding ways to keep drivers healthy should be considered a retention (and humanitarian) issue.

Elevate driver satisfaction with proper equipment maintenance

Equipment issues pose a significant challenge for fleet managers, impacting driver satisfaction, productivity, and ultimately, the bottom line.

As we mentioned, 31.7% of drivers reported equipment issues as a primary concern in Q1 of 2023, surpassing any other category of issues. In this section, we'll explore the detrimental impact equipment issues can have on drivers and provide insights on how to overcome these challenges.

Maximizing driver pay and productivity

During a freight slowdown, equipment issues can prevent drivers from logging valuable miles, leading to reduced pay and increased frustration. Fleet managers should work to minimize driver downtime by facilitating quick turnarounds in the shop. In situations where immediate repairs are not possible, providing drivers with loaner vehicles might prove to be a better alternative to breakdown pay.

While drivers may be compensated for breakdown-related pay, the inability to run miles can make them feel as though they are not earning money: a perception that can contribute to dissatisfaction and ultimately lead to higher driver turnover. By keeping drivers on the road and enabling them to log more miles, fleet managers can reduce frustration and meet driver pay expectations.

The importance of proactive fleet maintenance

Maintaining fleet equipment is not just a matter of compliance; it is crucial for safety, reliability and

cost-effectiveness. Fleet managers must ensure that vehicles and drivers are always ready at a moment's notice. **Reactive fleet maintenance**, which involves fixing machinery only when it breaks down, may seem cost-effective initially. However, long-term consequences often include unexpected downtime, unforeseen equipment repairs, additional labor and a negative impact on driver morale and productivity — making it the far more expensive option.

Preventative maintenance, on the other hand, focuses on regularly scheduled maintenance and repairs to keep equipment operational for longer periods. By adopting a preventative maintenance strategy, fleet managers can proactively identify and address potential issues before they lead to downtime and costly repairs.

By minimizing downtime, enhancing reliability and improving safety, you'll be demonstrating a commitment to your drivers by sending a clear message that you value their well-being and success. Not only will this reduce frustration and boost morale, it will help cultivate a better manager-driver relationship, resulting in drivers who are more engaged, loyal and likely to stick around.

Leverage tools to help you succeed

Implementing a robust inspection and preventative maintenance system enables fleet managers to empower drivers, track maintenance schedules effectively, reduce the risk of accidents and optimize the lifespan of their equipment.

Whip Around offers comprehensive solutions for **streamlining fleet maintenance processes**, enabling seamless collaboration between drivers, managers and mechanics and giving supervisors complete visibility into the fleet's maintenance status, allowing them to prioritize repairs, create work orders, and maximize vehicle uptime.

The role age and gender plays in driver shortages

The average age of U.S. commercial truck drivers is about 55, and while women make up 47 percent of the nation's workforce, they only account for about **16 percent** of truck drivers. One of the quickest ways to overcome driver shortages is to reach women and younger drivers. This will be even more important over the next two decades as the lion's share of the driving force retires.

Part of this disparity has to do with people's idea of trucking. Throughout the seventies and eighties, media and popular culture crafted a perception of trucking as a boys' club. Truck drivers were often portrayed as anti-establishment loners who could only be found in their trucks or at truck stops.

The public perception of driving has really turned around in the last few years. A national poll from Trucking Moves America Forward showed that

87 percent of the population had a favorable impression of the trucking industry. Some other key findings included:

- 97 percent of Americans believe the trucking industry plays a "very important role" in the nation's economy.
- 85 percent considered truck drivers to be professionals
- 78 percent believed truck drivers have higher safety standards than other drivers

While the nation has turned the corner on its overall impression of the industry, some work still needs to be done to improve the perception of truck driving as a career. The industry as a whole would benefit from broadening the perception of truck driving as a career choice, particularly with younger demographics, women, and minority groups.

Individual companies should focus on this area of opportunity in their recruitment and marketing efforts. We'll address this a little more in the recruitment section, but this is an effort that touches every aspect of marketing, from the images you use for your website to the individuals you choose to represent your business in recruitment efforts.

Tips for identifying and recruiting the best drivers

When it comes to recruiting drivers, companies of various sizes navigate different advantages and challenges. Companies with smaller fleets can benefit in the area of company culture and values because of their tighter, close-knit community, but might not be able to reach the same number of potential drivers or offer larger compensation packages like enterprise-sized companies.

Leaning into your strengths as an organization while finding the best ways to make up for organizational weaknesses is integral to winning the recruitment game.

Here are some tips for leveling up your recruiting.

Demonstrate your dedication to safety

Maintaining excellent safety and compliance practices is crucial for creating an environment that appeals to experienced and skilled drivers who value their own physical and mental health and the reputability of the company they work for.

Implementing rigorous safety protocols and maintaining compliance with industry



regulations creates a sense of trust and reliability among drivers. Through fostering and showcasing a strong safety culture, you'll inspire confidence in potential recruits and catch the attention of quality drivers who share that commitment to safety.

By investing in safety training, providing well-maintained equipment and implementing fatigue management programs, you can create a supportive and secure work environment. This also helps for retaining employees, as drivers who feel valued and protected are more likely to stay with a company for the long term, improving the quality of your driver pool over time.

Exceptional safety and compliance practices contribute to a company's reputation in the industry. A strong safety record and compliance history demonstrate professionalism and reliability. Positive word-of-mouth spreads quickly in the trucking community, and drivers are more likely to recommend companies with exemplary safety practices to their peers.

Showcase equipment maintenance best practices

As mentioned previously, a fleet's approach to equipment maintenance is often a critical element for drivers evaluating potential employers. During the recruitment process, make sure you actively and transparently communicate your maintenance processes and procedures to potential drivers. In addition, you can highlight certifications and compliance records that demonstrate your company's commitment to maintaining high standards.

As part of the recruitment process, consider inviting potential drivers for a tour of your company's maintenance facility to provide a firsthand experience of the exceptional processes in place. If you utilize digital fleet maintenance software or telematics systems, highlight these technological tools and integrations to potential drivers to demonstrate how you proactively monitor vehicle health, track maintenance schedules and ensure timely repairs.

Identify your target driver

The adage that you hit what you aim for is accurate. When you're hurting for drivers, casting a wide net seems like the smartest action. But the truth is that you end up hiring people who aren't good fits and will eventually move on. If you're not sure who your target drivers are, there's a high likelihood that turnover problems will continue.

Plus, if you're not selective in the hiring process, you can end up with a company culture that negatively impacts your ability to recruit good drivers. Drivers talk, and the best drivers are looking for places they'll want to work. Hiring drivers that meet your criteria makes it easier to recruit similar drivers in the future.

Spend time thinking about the driver you want to hire:

- How much experience do they have?
- What are their values?
- What are their long-term goals?
- What would they bring to the company culture?



You don't need to look for perfect drivers that match all of your criteria, but having a clear understanding of your ultimate goals helps you prioritize qualities and make informed concessions in the recruitment process.

Market yourself as a driver-centric business

When you market yourself as a business, where is your focus? Obviously, you want to communicate to potential clients that you're a dependable company delivering timely shipments. But you can do that and lean into the driver's side of your business.

By focusing on your proactive maintenance processes and the safety, attentiveness, and experience of your drivers, you put the focus on the people customers will be dealing with during

the typical day. You can also put a human face on your business, communicating that your drivers are important to you. Clients want to work with a company that demonstrates pride in their employees, and drivers want to work for a company where they'll feel valued.

It's a win-win.

Digitize your presence and recruitment processes

Many fleet-oriented companies are standing by processes that worked in bygone eras. They're paying for advertisements in industry-specific print publications and local newspapers. They're putting up flyers on bulletin boards in unemployment offices.

These practices might still move the needle, but they're no longer your only option. When today and

tomorrow's drivers look for a job, they're looking online. It's imperative that you not only reach them there, but also consider how you're perceived online.

Check your website

Your website offers the first impression a potential candidate will have of your company. So be careful about trying to cut corners by setting up your own website without taking web design and best UX practices into account. It's critical that your website is:

- Not outdated (It should be as easy to read on a smartphone as a desktop)
- Easy to navigate, including on mobile devices
- Updated with critical information (For example, you don't want 2015-era compensation information listed)
- Targeted toward people looking for a career with you (Are the next steps clear? Is the contact information current? How about the "about us" page?)

Get serious about social media use

You might not think of social media as a tool that will be helpful for a trucking business. The fact is that since most of your drivers are already on social media and use it to stay connected to family and friends, it's short-sighted not to take it seriously.

You don't have to hire a full-time social media person, and you don't have to go all in on every platform. Pick a couple of platforms that make

the most sense and learn how to get the most out of them. A couple of good places to start would be Facebook (since most people have some presence there and the tools exist to create groups and network with others), LinkedIn (the most employment-focused social platform), and Instagram or TikTok to reach Gen Z drivers.

Take advantage of job posting boards

As opposed to posting on more general websites like [Monster](#) or [Indeed](#) (which can be helpful options), there are plenty of trucking-industry job boards that can be a more strategic way to reach drivers who are looking for driving positions. Check out a few of the following options:

- [EveryTruckJob.com](#)
- [All Truck Jobs](#)
- [Truck Driver Jobs 411](#)
- [CDL Jobs](#)

Consider recruitment management software

If you're on the hunt for a system that can help hiring managers be more efficient in managing the employee lifecycle from recruitment to hiring, you might consider using recruitment software like [Driver Reach](#) or [Avatar Fleet](#).

Connect with driving schools in your market

There's probably more than one **school in your area** for people interested in learning to drive a truck and get their CDL license. Find creative ways to partner with that school so you can build relationships with administrators and students.

This could include things like:

- Offering sponsorships
- Mentoring new drivers
- Donating money, supplies, and time to the school
- Supporting the school at job fairs and community events

Building relationships here can help keep the trucking industry vibrant in your area and ensure that you have a never-ending driver pipeline.

Improve your messaging

In the places where you intersect with potential recruits, it's essential that they can get the general knowledge needed to understand your company and the specific information required to move forward in the employment process.

This means being very strategic about what and how you communicate. You'll want to review how you're presenting your:

- Quality and reliability of equipment
- Compensation and benefits
- Company culture
- Driver testimonials (Video testimonials are

particularly effective)

- Responsibilities related to the position
- Day-to-day expectations

Check out other companies. What do they communicate about their culture and benefits? Find the best ones, replicate their strengths, and find areas you can improve upon in your messaging.

Invest in recruiting from underrepresented groups

The **U.S. Census Bureau** reported that 90 percent of truck drivers in 2017 were white men. That's starting to change, but there is still a lot of opportunity to grow a diverse workforce.

While institutional change is slow, there are some things you can do to attract a more diverse driver culture and reduce turnover.

1. Invest in company training

Underrepresented drivers who join the trucking industry often experience discrimination and harassment. Workplace training for supervisors, dispatchers, and drivers can help make your organization a place where people feel comfortable driving.

2. Express your commitment to diversity

Regularly communicating your values to current employees and potential recruits can have a huge impact on company culture.

3. Craft a more inclusive hiring process

It can be a challenge to recognize how you may inadvertently exclude or disincentivize others. For instance, if all your marketing materials feature people that look like you, you might not notice how others perceive your company. Use the recruiting process to communicate your commitment to diversity, and make sure your social media, website, and workforce reinforce that commitment.

Establish your company as an authority

People naturally gravitate toward companies that they perceive as being the best. Luckily, that doesn't necessarily mean the biggest. There are ways to position your company and fleet as a premier business in your industry.

Locally, this means raising the profile of your company through community involvement. This could mean food drives, charity events, and getting involved with the local Chamber of Commerce. Everything you can do locally to raise people's awareness of your company, the more likely they are to think positively of you when they think of trucking.

The way you incorporate social media or even activities like blogging or podcasting into the mix increases people's sense that you're not just a local company: you're a thought leader in the space. This makes your company a destination for people looking to start a driving career.

Create a referral program

There is a real sense of community and camaraderie among drivers. If your company is terrible, your drivers will let others know. But people expect their company to be a good workplace, so sometimes they're less likely to talk you up when they're happy. A referral program can fix that. This can be an opportunity to secure quality drivers without feeling like you're actively poaching them from competitors.

You keep positive feedback in mind by offering a bonus to employees that refer drivers. Making that bonus contingent upon new drivers being a good fit is a good idea. Consider making that bonus kick in after a trial period of 1–3 months.

Resist the urge to always be taking resumes

A lot of companies fall into the temptation of taking applications all the time. There's a sense of security in sitting on a bunch of resumes in case you ever need a new driver. But if you're always taking resumes, drivers assume you're not really hiring. They might drop one off, but they're not really invested in the idea that they'll have an opportunity to work for you. By the time you get to their application, they will have secured work elsewhere.

Instead, shoot for short windows when the application window is open. This creates a sense of urgency around applying and increases anticipation for pursuing your company.

Creating a company that retains drivers

Improving your recruitment strategies is important, but retention is the key here. The better you get at finding and hiring the right people, the better your retention will naturally be. But there are still some areas that will help you hold onto your best employees.

Prioritize exit interviews

You can't always trust yourself to know what your strengths are as a company. One of the best ways to truly understand your strengths and weaknesses is to interview drivers as they leave your company. Exit interviews can reveal compensation, benefits, schedule, equipment, company culture, or leadership trends you may need to address.

Ideally, you want someone in HR to conduct this interview—or at least a neutral party. When people in leadership conduct exit interviews, it impacts the employee's candidness. And exit interviews really only work if employees can be candid.

The goal is to get as much useful information as possible with questions like:

1. Why are you leaving the company?
2. Was the job what you expected?
3. Did the company supply you with the tools and resources to do the job?
4. Would you recommend this company as a good place to work? Why or why not?

5. What was your favorite thing about this company?
6. What was your least favorite thing about this company?
7. What would it take for you to stay in this job? In this company?
8. How can we make this a better work environment?
9. Were there any policies or procedures that you would change? Why?
10. What is the biggest problem you experienced working here?
11. Did you feel you were a valued asset to the company?
12. When did you begin looking for your new job?
13. How would you describe this company's culture?
14. What would you tell your replacement about your job?

Remember, the goal of the exit interview isn't to collect data. It's to gain other perspectives about your business in order to make substantive changes to how things are communicated and accomplished. The more exit interviews you perform now, the better you'll understand your company culture from the inside—and the fewer you'll have to conduct later.

Create a game-changing company culture

Discussions about retaining employees often focus on compensation. And while being competitive in your pay is critical, it might not be the linchpin you think it is. Creating a comfortable, respectful and employee-centric workplace can set your company apart.

This might feel like a challenge because your drivers spend most of their time on the road, and there isn't a lot of facetime between managers and employees. But that actually makes company culture even more crucial. If the limited office or co-worker interactions a driver has are perceived negatively, it greatly impacts their view of the job overall.

Some areas to focus on include:

1. Soft benefits

Many other work environments offer soft benefits like lunches, snacks, paid volunteer time, gym memberships, and even co-worker relationships. Finding ways to bring those benefits to your drivers can have a huge impact. This could include things like coffee or restaurant gift cards, reimbursement on mobile phone bills, or free streaming services. Think about what you can do to make the time on the road more enjoyable and your drivers feel more cared for.

2. Open communication and resolution

A lot of people get into driving because they're more introverted and enjoy the time on their own. That said, a work environment still requires synergy between employees and leadership. This harmony is a lot harder to create when people don't get a chance to interact regularly with one another. Engaging drivers transparently in the inspection process and empowering them to report issues can give them a sense of ownership over their equipment, boosting morale and productivity.

This puts a lot of responsibility on managers to check in on drivers regularly in a way that nurtures a relationship without making them feel micromanaged. You might have a weekly check-in video call where you ensure everything is aligned for the week and their needs are met. Or come up with other creative ways to maintain that connection.

3. Be mindful of drivers' work-life balance

Being away from home for long periods can wear on drivers in ways they didn't anticipate. It impacts family dynamics and can make drivers feel alienated from others. These issues are ramped up when their schedule is constantly in flux.

Set days off or accrued time off can help, but be open to direction from your drivers. Bringing them into this discussion can make them feel like their well-being is a genuine concern.

Ultimately, working on your company culture communicates that you value each person independent of title or role. When your culture is good, it tells drivers that they are more than a replaceable means to an end.

Put safety first

The **FMCSA has strict rules** intended to keep the roads safe. These rules place a lot of responsibility on fleet managers and drivers to keep vehicles in top condition and running smoothly, including daily inspections and quick maintenance turnarounds.

Some of these rules can feel like unnecessary red tape, and your drivers may complain about having to follow them. You might think that allowing them to cut corners or even mirroring their negativity builds camaraderie. The fact is that most employees grumble about the repeated tasks they have to do, and your responsibility is to keep their eye on the big picture. By doing so, you're not just enforcing government oversight but also reinforcing your commitment to keeping them safe from injury and from the psychological damage of injuring others.

With Whip Around, you can make your daily inspections more powerful—while making it even easier on your drivers. Drivers perform DOT-compliant inspections on their mobile devices. If defects show up, they don't have to try and hand write the problem in a small field while balancing a clipboard. They can use the simple voice-to-text feature to clearly communicate the issue with as much detail as necessary.

When defects are noted, fleet managers receive immediate notification, enabling them to craft a work order right in the app, dramatically reducing the time assets spend in the repair pipeline. This ensures drivers aren't missing work or doing unnecessary work because of unplanned and drawn-out downtime.

On top of all that, Whip Around enables you to set up reminders for preventative maintenance based on your assets' specific needs, whether that's a specific time frame, engine hours, or distance. This set-it-and-forget-it feature means that every vehicle is operating at peak performance, and the defects that show up are infrequent and less severe.

Invest in top-tier equipment maintenance tools and technology

Myriad technology platforms offer a wide range of solutions to improve fleet operations, maintenance, compliance and safety. Whether it's telematics, autonomous vehicle technology, GPS tracking, or fleet maintenance software like Whip Around, each tool addresses specific concerns and offers unique benefits.

To choose the right technologies for your fleet, it's important to consider your near and long-term goals, such as maintenance, compliance, or ROI, as well as your fleet size and growth. Fortunately, many of these industry platforms integrate seamlessly with one another to provide an interconnected network of data and tools. Whip Around, for example, **integrates with a variety of industry-leading platforms** to improve efficiency, reduce operating costs and deliver exceptional experiences for its customers.

Find and keep the right employees

In today's environment, finding and keeping drivers is critical. Increased retention rates lower costs, improve company culture, and build a more productive workforce. By implementing these tips, you can find and hold onto employees, reducing expensive turnover.

Schedule a free demo if you're interested in finding out how Whip Around can help you keep drivers happy, drive down repair costs, improve compliance, and greatly reduce unnecessary downtime.

[START FREE TRIAL](#)

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