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Acuity Truck Driver Appreciation Essay

Driver Shortage

Have you ever had to go to work when you weren't feeling well? Have you ever been told you couldn't go on vacation with your family or take a day off to attend an important event? These are problems that my truck-driving father faces often. One time he was in the hospital on IV antibiotics to treat a blood infection. He called into work to ask for someone to cover his run so he could finish his course of treatment. While the dispatcher felt bad for him, he was told that due to a shortage of drivers there was no one to cover and he would need to come in anyway. One way to honor our professional truck-drivers is to focus on improving some of the problems that are plaguing the industry and making their jobs more difficult. One problem that needs addressing is the driver shortage facing our country.

The shortage of qualified professional truck drivers in America has become a real issue for a many. Companies are having a hard time finding truckers to haul their freight. There are not enough drivers to operate all of the tankers, refers, flatbeds, livestock, dry-box, belly dump and over-size tractor-trailer combinations. Because of this shortage, freight prices are skyrocketing and are being passed on to the consumer. While this may seem like a good thing for veteran drivers because of the higher pay-rates, it has its drawbacks for them as well. They are being asked to take more long runs, fewer vacations and drive when they are not feeling well

because there is no one to cover their shift. To compensate for this shortage, trucking companies are forced to run long loads with dollies and turntables in double and triple combinations extending past 115 feet bumper-to-bumper. These long combinations are more difficult to drive and require more skill and concentration on the part of the already overworked driver.

One of the most under-tapped resources in the trucking industry is a female truck driver. In a field that long been dominated by men, more is being done to recruit qualified women drivers. The number of women drivers on the road is at an all time high of about 6%. Women are becoming more attracted to a career in driving because the increase in technology is making the job less physically demanding. The social stigma on women truck drivers is also being minimized in modern society. There are many studies to back up the fact that women are excellent drivers – and that they even exceed men in many aspects. For instance, they have fewer catastrophic accidents because they are generally more cautious than their male counterparts. One thing that will help recruit more women and help alleviate the driver shortage is to have those female drivers who love their jobs share this with other women at job fairs, through social media and other advertising outlets.

Another possible solution to the driver shortage is recruiting and retaining younger drivers. The average age of truck drivers in America is 49 years old. This is an older average than most other industries and is having significant impacts as these older drivers near retirement. There are a couple of things that can be done to aid in recruiting young drivers. One would be to lower the minimum interstate CDL

age requirements to allow adults 18 and older to become professional drivers. With a lot of training and time on the road with an experienced veteran driver, younger drivers could become a viable solution to the shortage. Many high-school graduates would be attracted to a career in driving right out of high school, whereas if they are forced to wait until they are 21, many will have settled on another career pathway and won't want to change. Another way to attract young drivers would be to offer paid training and to publicize the fact that truck-drivers make as much per year on average as most college graduates. The trend to push college education on young people is hurting recruitment in many blue-collar industries and this trend needs to be examined.

Actually solving the driver shortage will take multiple solutions and many years, in the meantime it's important to remember that we have many over-worked and underappreciated professional drivers who are paying the greatest price. They are missing life opportunities they will never get back and driving when they should be resting or healing. I am grateful for the sacrifices of my dad and all of the professional truck drivers out there!