

5 Secrets your trucking employer may be keeping from you

Discover what it costs you!

Let's face it – drivers get lied to and misled a lot. Their experiences often go from bad to worse every time they make a company change after having been promised the moon, the stars and everything in between. Call it bad recruitment strategies or a fundamentally poor cultural infrastructure, what the driver sees is that he or she is not getting what they bargained for.

There are the obvious incentives, the sign on bonuses, competitive mileage rates or dedicated run, but what about the things that drivers aren't seeing because they're so focused on their bottom line? What about the costs that take away from the very incentives that drew them to a company?

That's what we'll be discussing here- the secrets that your trucking employer may be masking with all sorts of 'competitive' incentives.

Secret #1 – The Risk of Paper Logs versus E-logs

E-logs will be mandatory by the end of this year- still many companies and drivers believe that e-logs will keep them from making money. What's more concerning is drivers are left responsible for correcting mistakes that dispatchers make with their customers by accepting loads that would be challenging to make on time. The e-log will prevent drivers from feeling pressured to violate their Hours of Service and correcting trip planning errors made by the dispatcher and shipper.

Let's look at this equation:

False logs + more work done = Success

Right?...

No! Dead Wrong.

It seems quite silly when it's laid out in front of you like that, but drivers and their companies hardly consider burnout rates and as a result, the increased chances of accidents and fatalities.

More alarmingly is that this isn't the secret we're talking about when it comes to paper logs versus e-logs. Here lies the problem: imagine you are involved in a serious accident. Naturally, the MTO or DOT are going to ask you to produce the last 14 or 8 days of logs, respectively. Based on the severity of the accident, the police and insurance companies will try to match up where you say you were, and where you were technically supposed to be, by looking at tolls, cameras, fuel receipts, etc. Herein lies the biggest problem: *you cannot be in two places at once*. It is important to understand that in a situation like this, no company would accept responsibility, leaving you, the driver to deal with what could be a devastating situation on your own. Further to this, companies using paper logs usually result in drivers not getting paid for all their hours because they have to truck illegally while making their logs look legal.

Secret #2 Leasing is always a great idea...

Owning a truck is an accomplishment for a professional truck driver. Due to the nature of the large investment, there is a natural dilemma between purchasing or leasing a truck. The obvious benefit to leasing a truck would be that monthly payments are typically lower because only the cost of depreciation is being accounted for. Having said that, lease periods can extend over many years, and have been known to be called 'never-ending-leases'. Leased trucks are often older and require more maintenance and it is important to note that in a lease set up, being unable to cover the cost of repairs or make payment towards the truck will lead to the truck being taken back by the lessor, without receiving any money back.

If you are looking to purchase or lease a truck, do your research and consider getting a written cost comparison between an outright purchase and a lease. When a contract is drawn, make sure that all payments are stated out-front and consider setting money aside (approximately 10 cents per mile) in an escrow account for future maintenance and repairs.

Secret #3 – Don't worry about citations and fines

Imagine this: you're across the border with a full load when you're pulled over. The state trooper or scale inspection station runs your license and informs you your license is suspended due to an unpaid citation/fine that happened at your previous company a few years back, or alternatively, a fine that you overlooked and decided not to pay. Now, here you are, across the border, unable to continue your trip, make your miles, deliver a load in a timely way and ultimately, make money.

In the case that your current or previous company says they will pay a fine, be sure to ask for a receipt of the payment. In the situation that you receive a citation or fine unrelated to your work, be sure to pay it before crossing the border.

Secret #4 – Earn more with percentage pay on loads

Some companies have a pay structure that pays the driver a percentage of the pay load.

Let's illustrate this with an example: Let's say that a driver must haul a trailer full of apples for which he gets paid 70% of the pay load, so \$1050 for that load. The following month, that same driver may be asked to haul a trailer of apples and still gets paid the same 70%, but only receives \$700 for that same load.

The problem with this pay structure is that it can be highly volatile, and drivers may end up doing the same trips for less money depending on supply and demand. If the shipper is faced with a high demand to get something sent out and there is a low supply of trucks available, the shipper will accept to pay a higher pay load because they have a higher need to get their load out. The opposite is true if the demand is low and the supply is high- because there are more trucks from which to choose, they don't have a sense of urgency, meaning the shipper can afford to choose the cheapest

offer. Under this pay structure, drivers share the risk with the company. Can you afford to share that risk?

Secret #5 - Pay package promises

You've been promised a mileage rate that is higher and more competitive than most trucking companies you're aware of. To top it off, you've got a sign-on and safety bonus that you look forward to depositing. You may have just struck the trucking jackpot! There's just one problem— did you get it in writing?

The "he said/ she said" game is one that often doesn't end well for the person who needs it most. Most importantly, a pay package won't be enforceable unless it's written down and accepted by both parties. If anyone makes you a deal you can't pass on, get it down on paper and read all the terms and conditions before you accept it- otherwise you may be entitled to a total of \$0.

What now?

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The purpose of this article is not to alarm anyone- but rather to equip drivers with tools to make the best decision they can when choosing their next trucking employer. By knowing these secrets up front, drivers can protect themselves from being in tricky situations that they wouldn't have otherwise foreseen.

About the Author



Hi. My name is Monica Martins, I work at Carmen Transportation. We are based in Toronto, Ontario in Canada, specializing in both local and cross border dry van shipping.

When I joined Carmen in 2016 one of my first projects was a survey of our driver's satisfaction while working at Carmen. I quickly realized some of the challenges they experienced working for other trucking companies, and what really made the difference for them working at

Carmen.

It says "Expect More" on the side of our trucks, and our drivers know this goes for both our customers and our drivers. At Carmen we take pride in being an industry leader in innovation, technology and state of the art equipment.

Here is how we address each of the secrets most trucking try to keep from drivers

1. At Carmen we have been on e-logs for SEVEN years. We are strong believers in the idea that you can make money while being fair and not cheating the system.
2. Our lease to own program is specifically tailored to each person who chooses to lease a truck- we have every intention of helping those who want to own a truck, instead of scamming them out of one.
3. Safety is the air we breathe- we take citations and violations very seriously and address them immediately. We have an excellent safety rating on both sides of the border and aim to keep it that way. We would never expect a driver to do something we wouldn't do.
4. The trucking industry is dense with competitors and short with drivers. Our pay package is not volatile with the market and is independent of how much the company makes- ensuring there is no risk for the driver.
5. We have a very clear and upfront pay package for all drivers- we do not promise anything that we can't deliver. In fact, for drivers who have financial goals, our company president has been known to sit with them and do some financial planning. We want our drivers to succeed in all facets.

If this article has left you curious, visit our website at carmentransportation.com or give me, Monica, a call at 416-667-9700 ext. 257.