

Why Driver Feedback is the **Key to Retention**

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Content for this eBook was provided by Max Farrell, CEO of WorkHound.

Retaining Drivers is Paramount

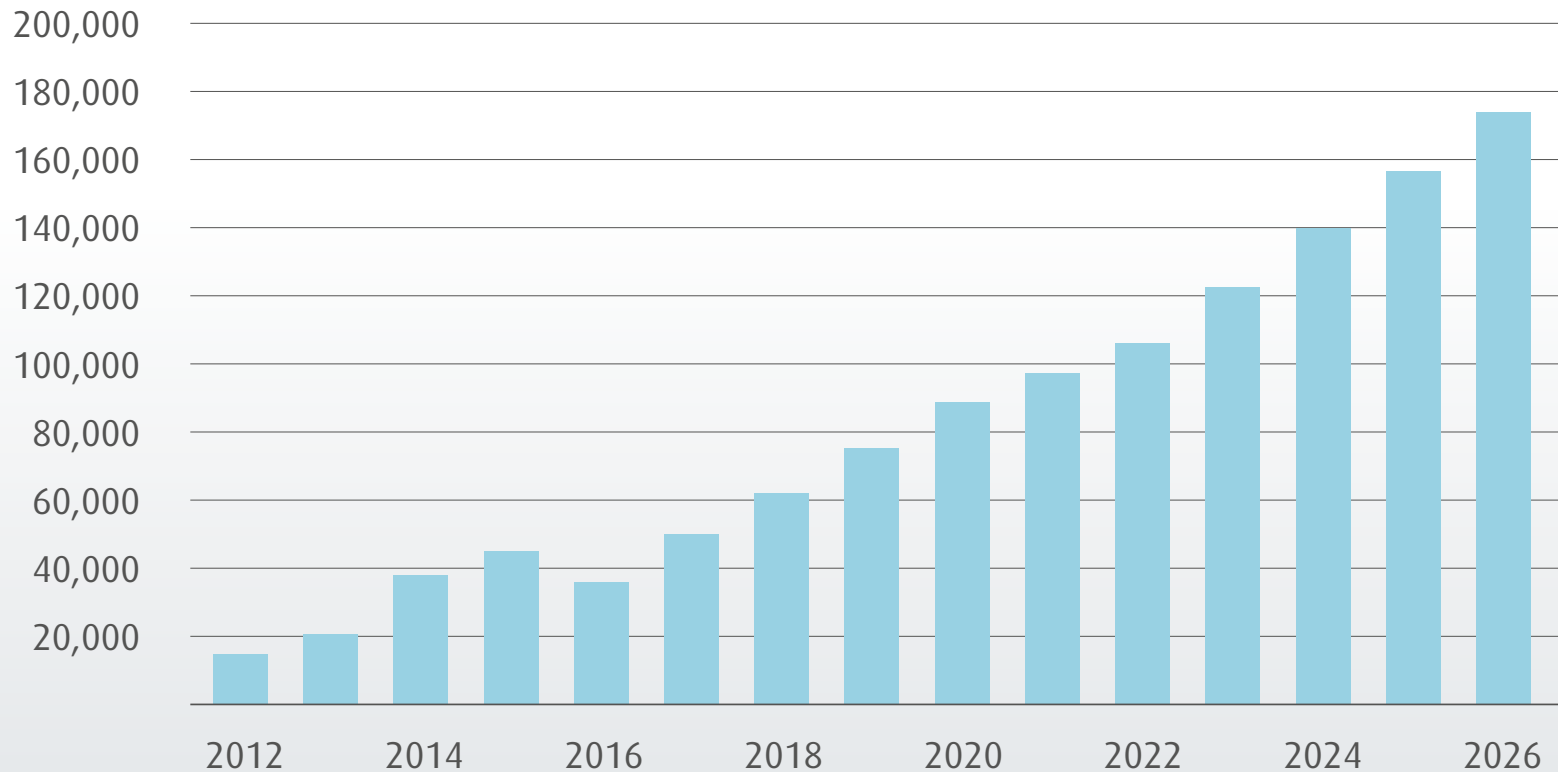
The trucking industry is under major pressure. Freight demand is on the rise and there are fewer and fewer drivers available to haul loads. As a result, the job market has become increasingly competitive, which means more and more carriers are at the mercy of a driver population that can pick and choose where they want to work. If they don't like something at one fleet? No problem, they can just leave—there are plenty of opportunities elsewhere.

Now it's more important than ever to retain drivers. Understanding what your drivers are experiencing and how they feel about their jobs—and then making any necessary changes before it's too late—is critical to keeping them. In this guide, we'll share ways you can obtain and use feedback to retain your drivers and also review the most common driver complaints.



Truck Driver Shortage; The Big Shift

So how did we get here? Truck driving has always been a high turnover business, but it has become even more so over the past several years. According to the [American Trucking Association](#), **the industry currently has a shortage of 60,000 drivers, and predicts the gap will swell to over 100,000 by 2022.**



Source: [American Trucking Association](#)

There are a few reasons why. First, fewer millennials are choosing truck driving as an occupation; there are simply not as many people willing to take on the difficult lifestyle and demands of a life on the road. With less young people joining the industry, [the average age of a driver](#) in the for-hire truckload industry has risen to 49.

Second, increased regulation and mandated use of electronic logging devices (ELDs) means tighter adherence to rules and potentially lower pay for drivers which may affect drivers staying in the market.



According to ATA data, the average age of a private fleet truck driver is now 52, followed by 50 at LTL carriers, 49 at TL carriers and 47 at drayage operators.

Source: [FleetOwner.com](https://www.fleetowner.com)



The third reason the shortage is growing is the huge uptick in freight demand. Consumers are increasingly purchasing products online, which requires direct shipment—and lots of trucks and thus drivers to move goods. Driver jobs are plentiful, but there aren't enough people to fill the seats.

So where does all of this leave fleets? Working extremely hard to compete for talent. Motor carriers across the U.S. have been sweetening deals for their drivers.



Many are offering higher wages and more benefits, as well as sign-on bonuses and other incentives for new hires.

Recruiting is at a fever pitch, but with average hiring costs exceeding \$8,000 per hire according to [one study](#), carriers need to focus more heavily on retaining the good drivers they already have.

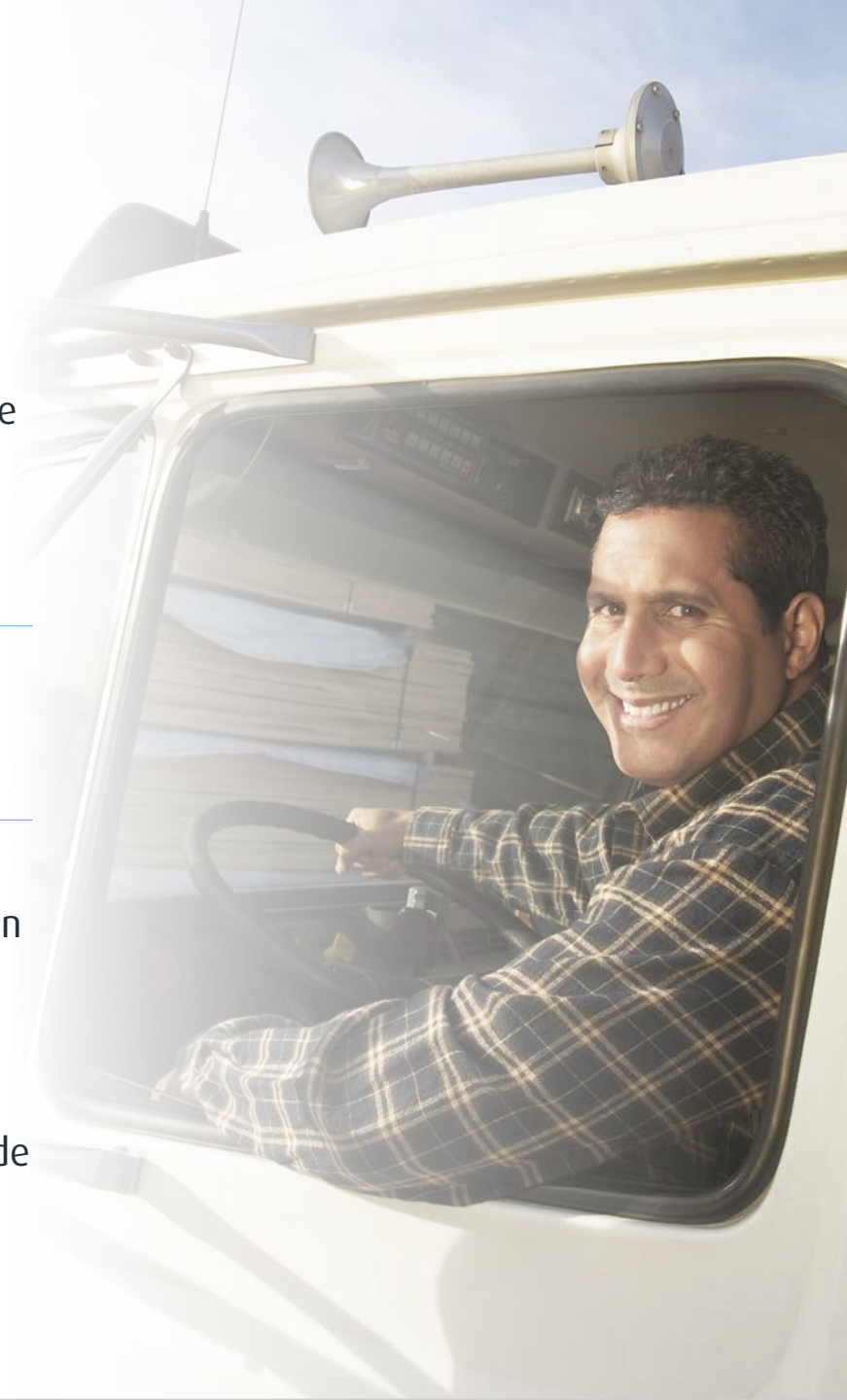
Using Feedback to Drive Retention

One strategy for retaining drivers is getting their feedback early and often. Ongoing feedback helps both carrier and employee align expectations and make any necessary mid-course corrections. Knowledge is power: if a driver has critical issues, i.e., is on the verge of quitting, the carrier can get insight into what's happening and potentially address the problems, perhaps saving the job.



When it comes to getting feedback, a carrier's response is critical.

Worse than never asking for feedback is asking for feedback and then doing nothing about it, or asking for feedback and implementing changes to address issues, and then not telling anyone about your actions. Developing a reliable communication loop will help drivers see that their voices truly matter, and they'll be more likely to provide actionable feedback in the future.



Ways to Get Driver Feedback

There are a number of ways to get feedback from your drivers, and none are mutually exclusive. Unfortunately, too many companies rely solely on exit interviews—and while these conversations can yield good information and may provide insight into trends over time, the fact that it's an exit interview means it's too late to do anything for the driver that's leaving. Thankfully, there are plenty of other ways to learn what's on drivers' minds while they're still driving for you:



Annual survey: Annual surveys allow you to measure driver satisfaction against benchmarks over time, enabling you to see trends and identify improvement areas specific to your business. Conducting surveys annually also helps you see if any changes you're making are having the impact you want them to.

Annual surveys should not be the *only time* drivers are asked for feedback; they should be part of a larger program. And if you do ask drivers to complete a survey, make sure you follow it up with a summary of results and a clear plan of action.



First 90-days programs: Turnover is highest within the first few months of a driver's hire, so many companies are taking extra steps to stay connected with new drivers in those critical first weeks and months, whether through [more comprehensive onboarding](#) or other programs. This might include formal check-ins at regular and frequent intervals, which give supervisors and drivers the opportunity to discuss what's going well and any areas where expectations (on either side) aren't being met.



Incorporating feedback/responses into standing meetings:

Many motor carriers are also making the gathering of feedback part of their company DNA. For these companies, getting feedback isn't a one-off activity, it's a vital and ongoing part of their company culture. Such companies may build feedback sessions into regular meetings, dedicating time for drivers to share their concerns, ideas for improvement and to discuss the company's response.



Instant anonymous feedback solutions: Using ongoing, instant feedback tools is another way fleets can get a pulse on driver satisfaction and identify urgent issues. Solutions like [WorkHound](#) enable drivers to quickly send anonymous feedback to carriers anytime, anywhere. By regularly asking drivers open-ended questions like "How are you feeling about work?" and "Why do you feel that way?" carriers may receive answers that reveal potential issues, giving them an opportunity to fix them.



"On average, our feedback solution helps save 7 out of 10 drivers that have urgent issues, which the carrier wouldn't have known about otherwise." – Max Farrell, [WorkHound.com](#)

Lessons Learned from Listening

As WorkHound has discovered, many driver concerns are universal. In fact, the top four issues affecting driver satisfaction are generally the same. Here are some of the things drivers complain about most and what you can do about them:

Issue #1: Pay



While of course many drivers say they want more money, that's not the only concern drivers have about pay. *How* people are paid is just as important as *how much*. Many drivers complain they simply do not understand their pay. Calculations are often complex, and it's important not to assume drivers understand your policy or procedures.

What you can do:

Clearly explain compensation to drivers to ensure that expectations are aligned. Take time to thoroughly detail how pay is calculated, when and how often drivers get paid and how your incentive program works. Make sure they know where to get their questions addressed quickly and thoroughly.



I don't think I was paid correctly.



Issue #2: People



Relationships really matter. Drivers want to feel respected by other drivers, managers, dispatchers and any others they deal with. Often, drivers complain about how they are treated; they do not feel respected.

What you can do:

Build empathy by implementing regular ride-alongs. Even dispatchers should go out on the road on occasion to experience what a driver's day is like.

Issue #3: Equipment



Trucks are not just the main tool drivers use to do their jobs; they are also their temporary homes. Friction arises when drivers are not consulted about equipment issues and not given the opportunity to provide input. Many drivers feel like management doesn't trust them regarding maintenance issues, when they feel they know their truck the best.

Sometimes it's a lack of communication. For example, a driver may feel that the addition of a camera in the cab is intruding on their privacy; it's their home after all. What the driver might not appreciate is that the addition of that in-cab camera significantly reduces insurance rates.

What you can do:

Work with drivers to understand how they feel about equipment issues. Make collaborative decisions when possible. Take time to get their input on equipment issues and fully explain any decision that is made.

Issue #4: Logistics



Many drivers feel the entire burden of supply chain falls on their shoulders, yet they feel marginalized when it comes to planning and logistics. Drivers are frustrated when their time isn't used efficiently and there are many aspects of a trip that are simply beyond their control. Drivers can be a great source of information, but they aren't always asked for input on routes or other logistics, which can lead to frustration. Ultimately, they want to be able to provide input and be part of the planning process.

What you can do:

Recognize that your drivers have valuable input and seek it out. Make logistic decisions that will encourage goodwill. For example, assign runs that meet drivers' personal needs and be understanding when they have a need to be home.



I wasted half a day because I was given the wrong address.

Keeping Drivers Happy (And at Your Company) for the Long Haul

When someone is ready to leave their job, it's typically not just one thing that pushed them to the edge; it's more likely several issues that have built up over time. Getting and responding to regular feedback from your drivers helps you identify issues and address them before they ever get to the breaking point.

As you build your retention program, consider the tremendous value that regular feedback and a strong communication loop around it can bring to your business. When you show your drivers their opinions and experiences truly matter, they'll be far less likely to hit the road to another carrier.



I know my truck;
you need to trust me.

About HireRight

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About WorkHound

WorkHound was started with the mission of helping people love the work they do. Their platform was custom-built for the remote, distributed driving workforce giving thousands of drivers a voice with their mobile-first anonymous feedback platform. With insightful analytics that hone in on business issues, they've helped companies of all sizes retain drivers, boost profitability, and save money.

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