Improve driver experience and your business with smart trailers powered by BlackBerry Radar

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Driver shortage is a growing industry pain point. With the average age of drivers at over 50, it is expected that drivers will continue to retire at a faster rate than the industry can recruit new ones. Current estimates put the industry shortage at about 50,000 drivers.[1]

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Increasingly competitive compensation packages are being offered to attract and retain good drivers. Some fleets have increased driver pay by as much as 15% since 2013 and the American Trucking Association (ATA) predicts that the trend of higher pay is likely to continue.[2] Although driver turnover slowed at the end of 2017, as many drivers experienced those pay bumps,[3] it is unlikely that increasing pay alone will succeed in retaining drivers in the long run.

While low pay is cited as the top reason drivers leave a company, it only accounts for 20% of cases and is usually exacerbated by other factors, such as time away from home and dispatching inaccuracies.[4] Moreover, raising compensation is financially unsustainable unless fleets can grow their revenue commensurately.

Fleets must address the challenge of attracting and retaining drivers with a holistic, sustainable, strategy. Such a strategy should look to:

- Find ways to decrease the avoidable day-to-day frustrations of drivers
- Improve operational efficiencies to increase company revenue
- Increase drivers' overall compensation

Smart Trailers Enabled by the IoT

Trailer telematics solutions enabled with sensors and running in the cloud are gaining traction in the industry with the creation of 'smart trailers.' Moving beyond GPS location, sophisticated solutions collect data on trailer parameters such as mileage, location, stoppage and load percentages as well as environmental conditions inside the trailer. Especially when transporting specialty freight, such as pharmaceuticals, electronics, produce, paint or paper, environmental readings inside the trailer, such as temperature and humidity, are critical. Devices can be installed in anywhere from ten minutes to several hours. While the data collected is powerful, it is the analytics and simple reporting that offer the opportunity for fleets to optimize their operations.

Locating Trailers: for drivers, time is money (except when it isn't)

When drivers spend time looking for a trailer in a yard it is a huge frustration and, at least partially, unpaid. Decreasing time searching for trailers is simple with real-time GPS location because it gives dispatchers:

- Up-to-date and exact location when directing a driver to their next pick-up.
- Updates if the trailer is moved between the time of dispatch and when the driver arrives, even within a yard.
- Tools, such as the BlackBerry Radar mobile link that gives the driver access to the up-to-date trailer location for a customizable time period.

Instead of wasting time looking for a trailer, drivers can get on the road sooner which enables them to drive more miles while remaining ELD compliant. Ultimately, accurate real-time location readings reduce day-to-day driver frustration and that helps fleets to be competitive in retaining drivers.

Curt Reitz, President of CTS, explained that one of his top priorities right now is making sure drivers get home every day because "whoever has the drivers is the one who is going to win this game." After adopting BlackBerry Radar, Reitz figures he is saving "35–40 minutes a day on average" for each of his drivers. While Reitz is still spending to recruit more drivers, he is "up retaining drivers" this year and that is what he is happy about.

"The driver is our focus and BlackBerry has made a difference in that. At the end of the day, that's what it means and that is why we love it."

—Curt Reitz, President, Contract Transport Services

A Loaded Question: when drivers are ready for pick-up, but the trailer is not

Consider this familiar situation. A driver is dispatched to a customer to pick up a loaded trailer. When the driver arrives, they find the trailer but there is nothing in it. Now the driver needs to wait. This is an all-too-common situation and for the drivers it is, again, unpaid or partly-unpaid time.[5] Plus, assets are now being under-utilized, hurting the bottom line.

Trailer telematics solutions can no longer be simple, twice-a-day, reporting on estimated trailer locations. Smart trailers need to include accurate location and breadcrumb tracing of routing, trailer mileage, door open/close status as well as loaded status. BlackBerry Radar, for instance, can even provide an estimate on the cargo space available on a trailer.

Having this information easily accessible allows:

- Dispatchers to know when the trailer has the correct load status for pick-up. This could result in a driver getting on the road sooner or avoiding going to pick-up an unprepared trailer.
- Dispatchers to quickly determine if there are alternate trailers ready for pick-up if the designated trailer is not ready but the driver is in the area.
- Fleets to determine with greater accuracy usual load and unload times for each of their customers and, with this information, work with their customers to optimize their processes to maximize the utilization of their trailers or increase detention billing.

Ted Daniel, CEO of Titanium, which has deployed BlackBerry Radar on its fleet for over two years, has been able to have conversations with customers on rates "based on this empirical data rather than in the past." The conversations are more productive for both Titanium and the customer. The result? Titanium negotiated a rate increase for that customer based on the actual trailer usage from the previous year. At the same time, Daniel says, Titanium has decreased driver wait-times by 45 minutes to an hour each day and decreased their tractor-to-trailer ratio from 1:4.5 to 1:4. He explained that Titanium's rate of return on the increased trailer utilization "is over 100 grand a month on 300 trailers" or "over a million dollars a year."

BY THE CUSTOMER'S NUMBERS

45 minutes saved per day per driver

50 dollars saved per driver hour

100 drivers

3,750 dollars saved per day

950,000 dollars saved per year

* numbers from Titanium Transportation Group Inc.

Fleet Optimization and Driver Retention

Trailer telematics can help address some of drivers' most salient day-to-day frustrations by decreasing unpaid time spent looking and waiting for trailers as well as improving driver-dispatcher communications. By focusing on these areas, fleets can also improve their daily operational efficiency by increasing trailer utilization and optimizing processes with customers for increased revenue capacity.

It is important that fleets choose holistic solutions to respond to the driver shortage. These solutions need to not only improve the day-to-day experience of drivers and address compensation concerns but ensure that fleets are also maximizing revenue to offset costs. Trailer telematics solutions offer simple and impactful tools to do just that.

[1] Tet, Gillian, "US Truck Driver Shortage Points to Bigger Problems," Financial Post (April 8, 2018).
[2] Inflation from 2013 – 2018 accounts for approximately 7% of the growth.
[3] "Truckload Turnover Rate Sinks in Final Quarter of 2017," American Trucking Association (March 19, 2018)
[4] Lockridge, Deborah, "The Top 10 Reasons Drivers Leave," Heavy Duty Trucking (January 2008).
[5] Some fleets have begun to compensate for this time after a specific wait period threshold has been passed.

BlackBerry Radar ® asset monitoring for non-powered assets was developed using 20+ years of experience delivering secure, mission-critical products. The solution provides deep visibility into the status of chassis, trailers, containers, and equipment, to help improve operations and utilization. It includes: ruggedized low maintenance devices that can be installed in less than 10 minutes; long lasting self-contained batteries, proprietary algorithms for enhanced information accuracy, and encryption, for reliable visibility you can trust; and a Web-based portal and tools for powerful and actionable analytics.

Contact BlackBerry Radar for more information on tracking your non-powered assets at 1.844.239.4572

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