



Carrier's Edge

Driving Your Competitive Advantage

By Jane Jazrawy

Vice President of Product Development at Carrier's Edge

New Year's Resolution: Think about Change

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“People hate change when it is someone else’s plan, when it is imposed on them, when they are told what to do and exactly how they must do it, when they are threatened with punishment if they don’t do it.”

Harvard professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter wrote this, but I think most of the trucking world could have said it for her. No matter how good a change is intended or designed to be, it’s still difficult at first. I’ve spent the last 15 years providing performance improvement services, helping individuals and organizations improve their products, processes, and business. I’ve had a lot of first hand experience with change and I can tell you it’s difficult for everyone, no matter the industry.

For the last few years, I’ve focused on the trucking industry where changes happen as fast or faster than anywhere else. It’s not just regulations that are changing, but the entire industry as the workforce ages and transforms, new technology comes along, and the way we conduct business evolves. With all that happening, sometimes it seems like the best anyone can hope for is to keep afloat.

Paving a New Road

Even though trucking is reeling

with the number of regulatory changes made over the last few years, somehow the industry keeps moving forward, and that will be the focus of this column – how the industry is managing to transform itself despite the pressures of external forces. In fact, this transformation is necessary according to Kim Richardson, President of KRTS Transportation Specialists in Ontario, who believes, “what we do now is going to have a huge effect on what happens in 5 years.”

Dolly Parton famously said, “If you don’t like the road you’re walking, start paving another one.” Many people have decided to pave a different path for trucking. They care deeply and look beyond the regulations to improve the overall quality of the industry, the people who work within it, and the perceptions about it amongst outsiders. In the coming months, we’ll talk to some of these people and get their perspective on how the industry is evolving.

We’ll also hear about the difficulties these movers and shakers encountered when trying to make a change, how they worked through those difficulties, and what they’re seeing for the future now. We’ll focus on the positive results, but success stories are much more interesting when you know how much blood, sweat and tears was a part of that success. We’ll make a point of giving you the story behind the story in each case.

The Road Ahead

One example of positive

change is the new Voluntary Apprenticeship Program for Professional Truck Drivers in Ontario. Richardson, one of the stakeholders in this program, agrees that real change needs to come from within. “More change is going to happen in the next 3 to 5 years than there’s been since the truck was invented,” he adds, “but the more change that we can create ourselves, the healthier it’s going to be for the industry.” In a future column, I’ll tell you more about the challenges faced in trying to make apprenticeship in Ontario a reality for the drivers of the future.

Apprenticeship is only one of the strategies developed to address issues the trucking world is facing. With constant talk of a looming driver shortage, the industry has started aggressively recruiting drivers from non-traditional sources. In the past, trucking was often a family affair with father and son alike driving for a local carrier. However, as the industry changes and more young people look at alternate employment opportunities, recruiters are being more innovative in finding drivers to fill those seats. More than ever, women, new Canadians, and aboriginals are being actively recruited and we’re going to devote some space to discussing those issues as well.

Although women drivers are still the minority, they’ve always had an important presence. Women often work as business managers while their husbands are out on the road, but they have become a force to be reckoned with in a variety of other roles - driver, dispatcher, safety manager and president.

Another area that’s undergoing a lot of change is technology. The trucking industry is often considered to be “behind the times” (especially in Canada where we’re constantly told that we’re slower to adopt technology

than our American counterparts are), but when you look below the surface you see a lot of interesting technology being used. Today’s rigs are extremely sophisticated and require the expert guidance of a highly skilled operator. Online tools are finding their way into every aspect of the business as well – recruiting, fleet management, education, and in-cab services to name a few. There are some real innovators out there doing very interesting things, and we’ll talk to them to find out what made them do the things they’re doing, how it’s worked out and what still needs to be done.

My New Year's Resolution

For 2007, my New Year’s Resolution is to think about change. Not the kind that you and I can’t control, but changes people have decided to make to improve the community. My goal is to get their stories and share them with you – maybe you can be inspired to change something too.

We’ve got a lot planned for this space over the next few months, but we also want to get your input. Do you know someone that’s making a change for the better and improving this industry? If so, let me know and let’s hear their story. As Silicon Valley inventor and scientist Alan Kay said, “The best way to predict the future is to invent it.”

Jane Jazrawy is the Vice President of Product Development at Carrier's Edge, a software-enabled service that allows carriers to improve their business performance by improving driver quality. Prior to this, Jane was a senior consultant with a number of global consulting firms, serving a diverse group of clients across the financial services, high tech, oil & gas, and mining industries. She can be reached at jane@carriersedge.com.