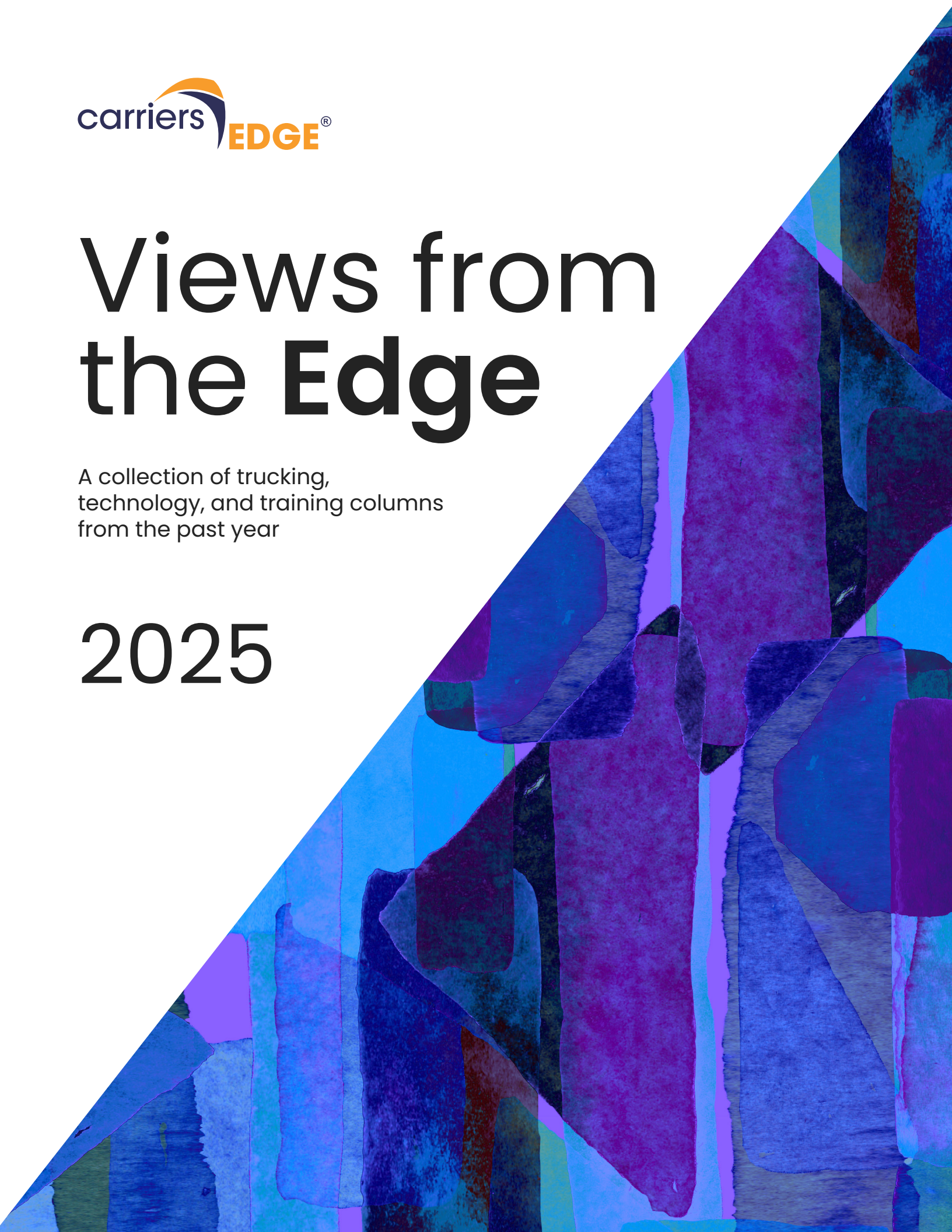




# Views from the Edge

A collection of trucking,  
technology, and training columns  
from the past year

## 2025



## *Welcome to* **Views from the Edge!**

Modern life throws a lot of information our way. Between constant messages, notifications, and a steady stream of online content, there's never a shortage of things to read, just a shortage of time. And even with the best intentions, industry articles and insights can easily get lost in a sea of open tabs and unread links.

That's why we continue to publish **Views from the Edge**, a curated collection of the best thinking from the CarriersEdge team over the past year—ideas, conversations, and industry observations that we believe will help you run a safer, more profitable fleet.

This collection gives you a chance to step back, slow down, and revisit some of the themes shaping the industry today.

Whether you're reading it fresh or coming back for a second look, we hope these pages spark new ideas, offer useful perspectives, and help you stay grounded in the bigger picture of what's happening in trucking.

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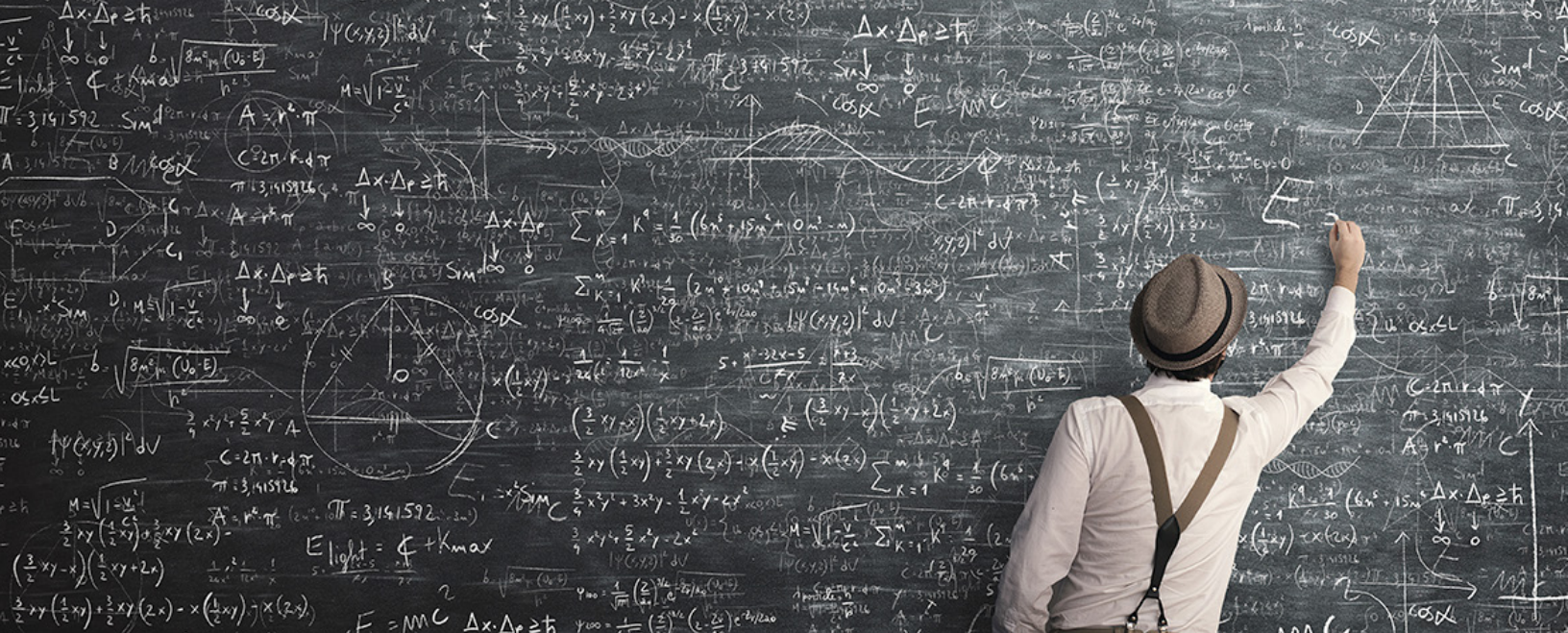


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# **BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**



# How Safety Adds Up: The 10 CPM Profit Gap

September 4, 2024

There's a saying—possibly Einstein's—that compound interest is the most powerful force in the universe. Whether he said it or not, the idea applies surprisingly well to fleet safety. As KSMTA COO Chris Henry explained in a [CarriersEdge webinar](#), small safety improvements—when repeated consistently—can deliver significant gains over time. The impact shows up clearly in one line on your balance sheet: insurance cost per mile.

To see what's going on, it's important to understand:

- Why safety pays off
- The 10cpm profit gap
- How to turn safety into savings

## Why safety pays off

Every company that does safety well has it built into its culture. However, Henry suggests that “while many companies claim this kind of thing, the really good ones actually see safety as a place to maximize profits and they actively work toward managing it.”

The trick, though, is that safety as a profit center is a ‘slow burn’. Although you won’t see the payoff right away, if you can get into the right habits and let them progress over time, you will start to see the compounding effect. “It’s like working out consistently over the span of years,” Henry says. “You won’t see a benefit on the first day or even the first week, but over time, the results will be there.”

*Among companies who are already doing lots of other things right, there is a potential 10 cent per mile advantage when they pay specific attention to managing safety*

## The 10cpm profit gap

Henry says that the real payoff comes in your insurance cost-per-mile. So what kind of numbers are we talking about? If we were to give an extreme example, we could compare a company that is absolutely terrible on safety with a company that is an elite, top performer. Between them, the bad company might be shouldering upwards of 24-25 cents in their insurance cost per mile, while the excellent company might be looking at something as small as 2 cents per mile.

Those are outliers, though. What about the average fleet? For the companies that Henry works with that are in the top 50% of performers, those that are taking safety seriously might reasonably enjoy a 4 cent per mile insurance cost, while companies that aren't paying as much attention to it are closer to the 14 cents per mile range. "That's where you get the 10 cents per mile difference."

This is to say that, among companies who are already doing lots of other things right, there is a potential 10 cent per mile advantage when they pay specific attention to managing safety.

## Turning safety into savings

When calculating your insurance cost per mile, there are going to be a number of factors that affect it, some of which you can change, and some you are unlikely to. Those ones that are unlikely to change include the type of freight you haul, as well as your fleet size, operating region and annual mileage.

*The trick, though, is that safety as a profit center is a 'slow burn'.*

To effectively make some change, focus on the factors you can control—like the skills and development of your drivers, how to use safety technology, and direct insurance factors such as claims history and coverage. Here's how:

### Driver training and safety record

Your drivers are the ones on the road, so of course they are going to be at the leading edge of getting your safety numbers in line. If you engage your people with a more robust training program (more content more often, better tracking on completion and re-certification, etc.), you'll start to see better, safer runs from them over time.

### Using tech the right way

Telematics can give you a more granular look at what's happening on the road—where things are going right and where they're not. But additional technology doesn't give you answers—it just lets you ask better questions. As Henry points out, "Simply putting dashcams in won't get you there—

actually taking safety seriously requires lots of follow-up programs to generate lower incident rates." When you're ready to invest in a tech 'solution,' what you're really investing in is a tech 'magnifying glass'—done right, it will allow you to intervene and fine-tune exactly where you need to improve, rather than guessing or making everyone in the company do extra training they may not need. Whatever you're learning from that new data, you've got to be ready with the right interventions and follow-up programs.

## Claims history, and more

By investing in all those other safety factors, you'll start to see a reduction in accidents and incidents and, ultimately, the number of claims you need to make will decrease. Safety audits will run smoother. Your risk profile with your insurer will improve. As for purchasing additional liability coverage, what about that extra cost? Henry says that "even if you are taking on this additional coverage, a 4 cpm insurance cost is still realistic for a company of any size—it's about reinvesting, how you're deploying your safety investments and tools, and that you're giving safety a seat at the decision-making table."

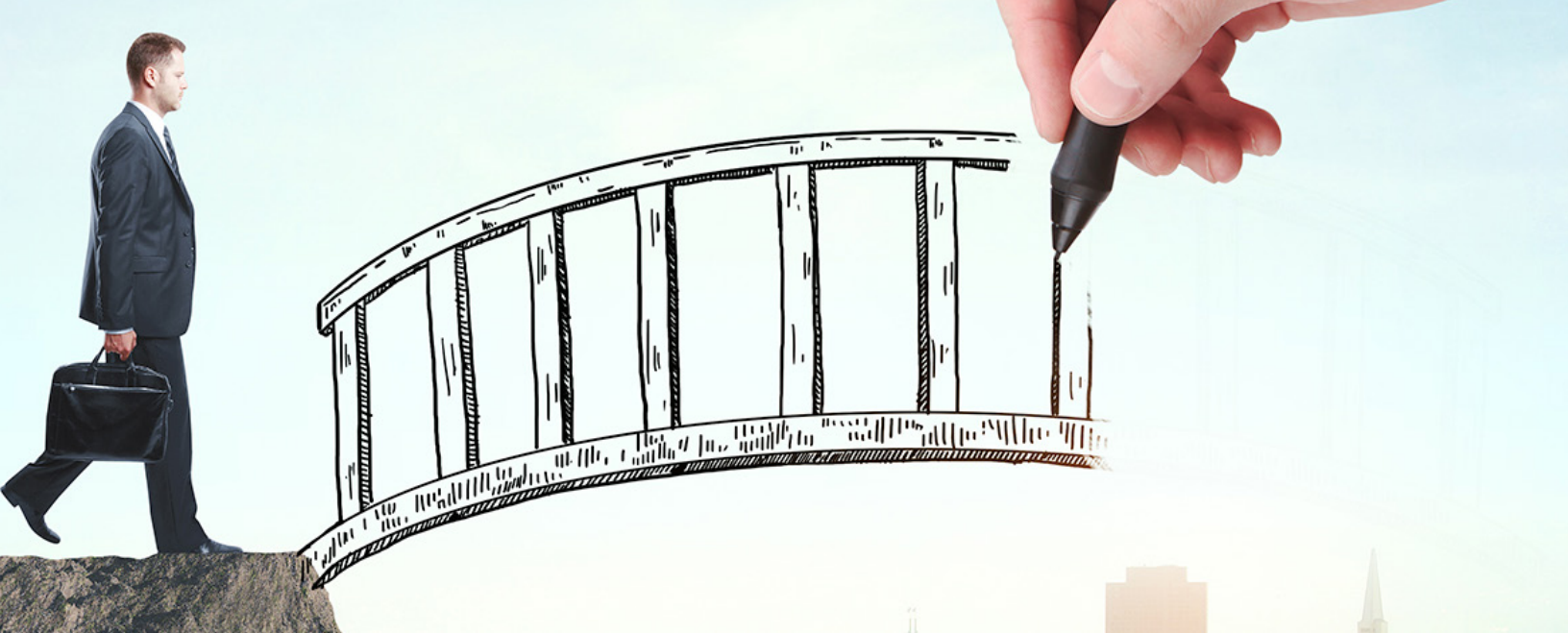
As each of these factors (and others) fall into line your insurance costs will improve.

The additive, compounding force of all these elements grinding away over the long term uses the same idea as compounding interest – set the process in motion, keep an eye on it, and let the benefits build and grow until you'll begin to see progressively better value in your insurance cost per mile.

And you don't need to be Einstein to make that math work.







# The Shifting Workplace: What trucking can learn from the mistakes of others

Mark Murrell  
March 5, 2025

*It's good to learn from your mistakes. It's better to learn from other people's mistakes.*

*Warren Buffett*

Trucking is not an industry of early adopters.

Some industries are full of companies that are eager to try new things, but trucking is not one of them. There are certainly some people in the industry more adventurous than others, but as an industry trucking is generally slower to adopt new technologies and business processes. Using the classic Crossing the Chasm model of technology adoption, trucking fits squarely in the “late majority” category.

That's not necessarily a bad thing. The “early adopter” and “early majority” people spend a lot of time dealing with problems while trying to figure out the best way to do something. By the time the late majority get involved, most of those problems have been resolved and it's much less painful to get to the promised benefits.

As long as you know how to learn from the mistakes of others, that is. Late adopters who don't learn from the mistakes of those who came before are doomed to repeat those mistakes, as well as losing time and falling behind competitively.

*To have real success with online, it needs to be balanced with in-person activities like classroom or practical.*

Trucking is at a point right now where, as an industry, it's starting to get serious about adopting some technologies and business processes that have become standard practice in other industries. As a result, there's a lot that can be learned about how best to implement those things, and how to avoid the headaches that others have had to endure.

We've picked three areas where trucking can learn from the mistakes of others.

## Online training: Too much of a good thing?

When we first launched CarriersEdge, back in 2005, we had already spent years building online training for industries like finance, telecom, energy, and

several others where it was an established part of employee training. Trucking, however, was highly skeptical – “Drivers can’t use computers” was a common response at the time.

Fast forward to today and the situation is completely different. In the 2025 edition of [Best Fleets to Drive For](#), for the first time, the primary means of delivering driver training was online. In many fleets, it’s just about the only training being offered for drivers. That’s a huge shift.

To have real success with online, it needs to be balanced with in-person activities like classroom or practical.

Other industries saw a similarly large swing when moving online and learned some important lessons along the way.

The most important lesson is that there is such a thing as “too much online”. When the bulk of the training is online, employees tend to lose interest and the novelty of “anytime, anywhere” fades. I once worked for a company that tried moving 90% of employee training online, and halfway through the first year they had to drop that down to 60% because employees were rebelling against it. It just didn’t work having that much training online.

*Surveys have become commonplace in trucking, so much so that we’re now faced with a new problem: **survey burnout**.*

We’re starting to see seeds of the same thing happening in trucking. Drivers right now are feeling disconnected, unsettled, and anxious, and with all or most training delivered online, those feelings just get worse.

To have real success with online, it needs to be balanced with in-person activities like classroom or practical. Even if the classroom is virtual, the process of getting people together to learn as a group balances nicely with self-paced online training.

(I fully acknowledge the irony of me saying “do less online” but it’s a matter of finding balance.)

## Employee surveys: Drivers are tired of talking

For the first 10 years that we ran the Best Fleets program, we said the same thing every year: Ask your drivers what they think; online surveys are cheap and easy so put some surveys out. Other industries were already using employee surveys regularly to gauge sentiment and collect feedback, and we knew it would work in trucking as well. In the 7 years since then, surveys have become commonplace in trucking, so much so that we’re now faced with a new problem: survey burnout.

Outside of trucking, companies discovered that online surveys were an easy way to get feedback and started doing more of them. Unfortunately, though, the quality of participation drops as the number and frequency of surveys increases – people just get sick of filling out surveys. At that point, feedback collection found a balance – some online surveys, but also phone call outreach, town halls, and informal meetings were all combined to get better insights with more reliability.

Trucking is at a similar crossroads now. Pre-COVID, we saw fleets regularly using phone calls and town halls to collect input from drivers. COVID moved all of that online and it was too much. A few fleets are starting to realize that and scale back the online surveys in favor of in-person communication, but we’re definitely at an inflection point with online surveys.

## Performance management: Rethinking stats

For years, fleet safety professionals were scrounging for any data they could get to help separate good drivers from bad. Quarterly safety bonuses typically centered on crashes, roadside inspections, logbook compliance, and other basic metrics because that’s all that anybody had to work with. Driver performance reviews consisted of a discussion of those items, a breakdown of how much of the bonus had been earned in the quarter, and what to do to improve next time.

## Then the technology arrived.

Once telematics, ELDs, dashcams, and scorecards came in, safety managers had all the data points

they could dream of, and tons of insights into which drivers were performing better and why. Those scorecards are increasingly available to drivers on demand, so the old quarterly review of bonus qualification is no longer necessary.

This leaves the fleet in a quandary – why do a performance review with a driver when they can see exactly how well they’re doing at any given time on their own?

In other industries, there have been granular performance metrics available for decades, so companies shifted performance reviews in a completely different direction. Instead of focusing on stats and numbers, they started focusing on the qualities and attributes that contribute to great numbers.

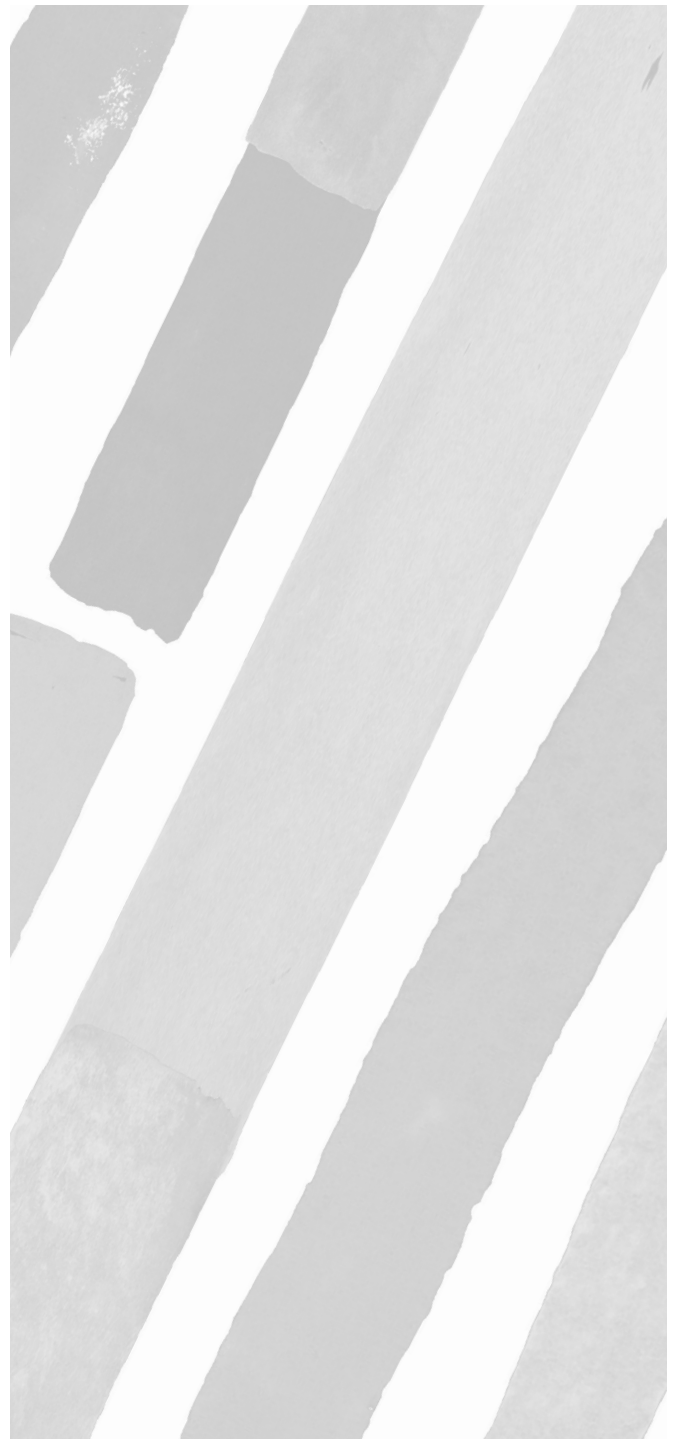
Once you have a mountain of data articulating exceptional performance, it’s a lot easier to start identifying the work habits, personal attributes, and behavioral qualities that best contribute to that performance. That’s where the performance review becomes really valuable – working with drivers to develop the qualities that will make them exceptional in the future.

*Drivers want those reviews, they want to have discussions about how to get better, and they absolutely want the career progression that comes with it*

In other industries, performance reviews become more about discussing those qualities, creating a plan to improve on them, and measuring the progress against plans from previous quarters. It’s a level removed from just reviewing the hard numbers, but it’s more valuable in the long run.

We’re just starting to see the first hints of that coming in trucking. In this year’s Best Fleets data, we saw many fleets recognizing that the old performance review model didn’t work, and a few trying some new things to replace it. Very few are thinking about “qualities and attributes” but that’s the direction that we’re headed. Drivers want those reviews, they want to have discussions about how to get better, and they absolutely want the career progression that comes with it.

These are just a few examples, but there are many places where trucking is starting to adapt technologies and processes that are already established elsewhere. Looking at how those other industries faced these challenges, and what they’ve learned along the way, can be a big help in getting new ideas off the ground smoothly. As the Oracle of Omaha said in the quote at the top of this piece, learning from the mistakes of others is much better!







# Building Better Owner-Operators: Supporting contractors for the long haul

May 7, 2025

*"Time to quit hauling someone else's wagon."*

*"I could make more running my own rig."*

*"Why not be my own boss and keep the whole paycheck?"*

The dream of becoming an owner-operator still has pull, and for good reason. But when the excitement of independence meets the reality of business ownership, many drivers discover they weren't as ready as they thought.

Many of them go bankrupt in their first year and that kind of instability hurts the driver, and it also poses risks for fleets. So, it's in the best interest of the fleet to help those aspiring business owners succeed.

That was front and center in the March 2025 CarriersEdge webinar, [Inside Training for Owner-Operators](#), where Mark Murrell and Jane Jazrawy

shared what the industry's best performers are doing to help their contractors succeed, and what drivers need to understand before making the leap.

It used to be common to hear that training contractors wasn't possible, but that's no longer a valid excuse. While there are still legal considerations, enough fleets are doing it successfully that it's become an industry expectation. Through tools like the *CarriersEdge Owner-Operator Business Skills* course and examples from Best Fleets to Drive For, we now have a clear roadmap for building stronger partnerships between fleets and their contractors.

Whether you're a driver ready to take the next step, a new fleet still learning the ropes, or a seasoned carrier looking to support contractors better, this article lays out what works.

## Mindset, money & mistakes

Running a truck is not just a job. It's a business. And the fleets that succeed with owner-operators are the ones that help reinforce that reality from the start.

As Murrell said in the webinar, "If you treat [owner-operators] like company drivers, they'll act like

company drivers, and that doesn't set them up for success."

It's up to the fleets to guide aspiring contractors in the right direction, encouraging a mindset shift from company driver to independent business owner.

Successful contractors think like business owners. They plan, track, budget, and measure their performance. They know their fixed vs. variable costs. They make informed decisions about what loads to take, how to manage maintenance, and when to say no.

Fleets can support that shift by asking early questions like:

- What kind of business do you want to run?
- What are your monthly costs, beyond fuel?
- What do you want your career to look like in five years?

Helping drivers answer those questions doesn't just protect their bottom line. It sets the tone for a stronger, more balanced relationship.

*If you treat owner-operators like company drivers, they'll act like company drivers, and that doesn't set them up for success.*

## What new contractors don't know (but should)

Fleets often focus on one group: either helping drivers transition into ownership or providing support to current contractors. The best programs do both.

New owner-operators need help understanding startup costs, tax structure, legal paperwork, and whether the owner-operator life is really what they want. The CarriersEdge course starts here, helping drivers prepare financially, emotionally, and operationally before they buy the truck.

Even experienced owner-operators still need support. Many lack financial systems, long-term planning, or a clear sense of how to stay profitable through market shifts. As Jazrawy pointed out, "They don't realize they're business owners. They act like company drivers with their own truck."

One fleet requires business plan reviews every three years. Another includes performance check-ins as part of quarterly coaching. That kind of consistent, non-intrusive support creates trust and better outcomes.

## Support without strings

The best fleets are building intentional, flexible programs that respect independence while reinforcing expectations.

What's working:

- **Onboarding business reviews:** Some fleets now include financial conversations and goal-setting during orientation.
- **Performance coaching:** Regular reviews of miles, fuel, safety, and operating ratio, framed as business discussions rather than lectures.
- **Mentorship programs:** Pairing newer owner-operators with more experienced peers or staff mentors.
- **Access to resources:** Some fleets offer structured business training or connect owner-operators with trusted legal, tax, or advisory services.

These kinds of support systems work best when they align with how contractors actually operate. That means offering flexibility, keeping things voluntary, and focusing on outcomes over processes.

*Stress matters. The more anxious a contractor is about money or uncertainty, the more risk they bring to the road.*

You can't manage contractors like employees, but you can still set expectations. Instead of saying, "You must take this course." Try saying, "Your contract requires a safety program. Here's one we offer. Or bring your own. Just make sure it meets these standards."

FedEx has been doing this at scale for years. Contractors are required to meet certain training requirements, but they can choose how. Most go with the fleet's preferred vendors. It works because it's flexible and objective.

Incentives help, too. One fleet offers discounts on parts for owner-operators who complete optional training. Others tie perks to safety scores or on-time performance.

These are low-pressure ways to drive engagement and offer support, without overstepping legal lines. Be sure to consult legal counsel to ensure your approach aligns with current regulations.

## **Soft skills, hard ROI**

It takes more than driving skills to succeed as an owner-operator. People skills matter, too.

Drivers, particularly contractors, often don't get training on how to manage people, negotiate with lenders, or navigate high-pressure conversations. But those are core skills for running a business.

Fleets are starting to offer optional training in:

- Leadership and communication
- Emotional intelligence
- Conflict resolution and negotiation

These aren't touchy-feely extras. They help owner-operators secure financing, handle disputes, and reduce stress.

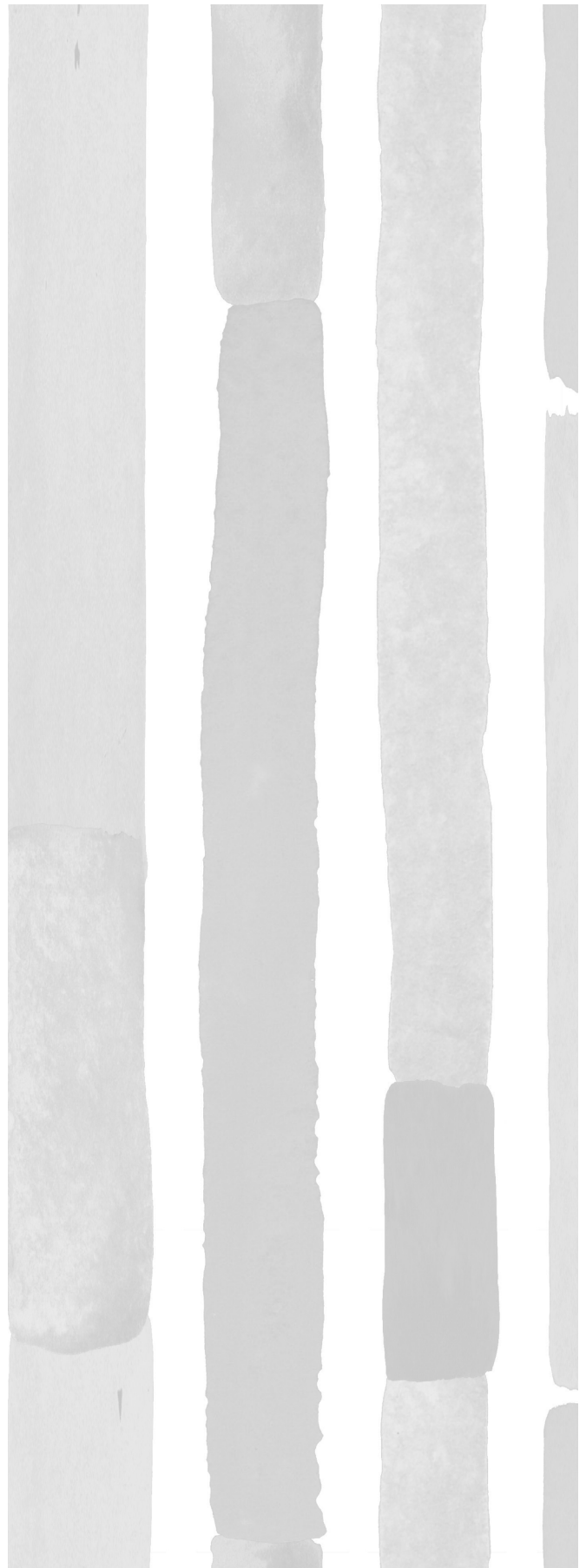
And stress matters. The more anxious a contractor is about money or uncertainty, the more risk they bring to the road. Predictability—financial and otherwise—is a safety tool.

## **Why supporting contractors helps everyone**

Helping someone become a successful contractor isn't just good for them; it's good for your fleet. More stability leads to better safety, higher retention, and fewer surprise exits.

You don't have to overhaul everything at once. Start by asking better questions. Build in coaching. Share resources. And keep the conversation going, through surveys, check-ins, or dedicated contractor groups.

Owner-operators aren't just drivers with a different pay structure. They're business partners. Treating them that way creates stronger fleets and stronger futures.





# **SAFETY MANAGEMENT**



# Safety *Beyond* the Truck:

## Keeping drivers safe when they stop

October 2, 2024

*"Safety comes first here."*

*"We're a safety-focused company."*

*"Safety is at the heart of what we do."*

I've heard these phrases enough times that they have become cliché. I know they're coming from an honest place, and the people saying them have generally devoted a significant portion of their working life to improving safety in their respective workplaces, but they are still said so commonly, they've lost their power.

In general, the industry has done a great job of improving safety for drivers and other motorists on the road. Fleets outfit their trucks with the latest safety equipment, have solid training and performance management programs, and these days also have dashcam-based coaching programs for continuous improvement.

That's all great, but it's only one part of the equation.

While the industry has done a great job of safety when the truck is moving, we see a lot less attention being paid to driver safety when the truck isn't moving. That's an area where many fleets still have blind spots.

To truly be safety-focused, a fleet needs to consider every aspect of the driver's experience, from the time they report for work at the beginning of the week until they go home at the end. That includes everything that happens at the terminal, at customer sites, at truck stops, and everything in between. And that's where we find the gaps.

In the [Best Fleets to Drive For®](#) program, we ask companies how they protect drivers when the truck is parked. The fleets that score well have panic buttons on their ELDs, personal safety training, and support programs to ensure drivers don't find themselves in unsafe places. However, a significant portion of respondents don't have anything at all. It's not that they don't care about their drivers, it's just that they've never thought about it.

Fleets always tell us that safety comes first, but they don't really need to say it. When drivers truly feel safe, it's apparent through a variety of places

like retention, safety performance, and other metrics. When carriers really do focus on safety as a corporate priority (as we discuss in the CarriersEdge webinar, [Inside the Business of Safety](#)), it comes through in the day to day operations of the company.

So what does it really mean to be a “safety first” fleet? Here are two things to consider:

- What happens when the truck isn’t moving?
- Who else is demonstrating a commitment to safety?

## When the truck isn’t moving

*To truly be safety-focused, a fleet needs to consider every aspect of the driver’s experience, from the time they report for work at the beginning of the week until they go home at the end.*

Keeping drivers safe when the truck isn’t moving means thinking about their experience at shipper sites, making sure they have access to parking, and making sure they stay safe while parked. These are things that need to be considered by the whole company, not just the driver and safety manager, in order to be executed properly.

As an example, it floored me to learn that until recently, it was common for a truck key to open multiple vehicles. As a non-trucker, I can’t imagine having a car and not knowing how many other people had keys that would unlock it. The idea that a driver may be staying overnight in a truckstop, and there could be any number of other people that have keys to that truck, strikes me as crazy. I get the practicality of it from a fleet perspective and the desire to avoid endlessly chasing down keys and making copies, but it’s pretty hard to argue that driver safety is paramount when they’re not even provided a secure space inside their own vehicle.

That’s just one example, but there are plenty of other places where things like this need to be considered. The fleets that do really well in this area have thought about the complete experience for a driver with their company:

- What it’s like when drivers walk into the

terminal (and, are they even allowed in the terminal)?

- What happens when their trucks need maintenance?
- How are they treated during pickups and deliveries?
- Where and how are they taking their off-duty time?

There are ways to address these questions to ensure the driver never needs to worry about personal safety. Most fleets have something for some of these (in-house maintenance, for instance) but it’s often only covering some of the scenarios drivers encounter. To really cover the issue thoroughly, all the scenarios need to be considered, and that relies on...

## Getting everyone involved

This is another place where most people have done some work but still have blindspots. It’s also how we can tell if fleets really are committed to safety across the entire company.

A driver should almost never just “find” themselves in a bad situation. Every bad situation is a result of decisions that were made earlier, by a variety of people, not just the driver. The choice of freight to carry, the choice of equipment to carry it, the routing, the selection of fuel network and parking along the way, the schedule for delivery, and even the matching of driver to fleet manager. All those decisions contribute to the situation the driver is in, and companies can make decisions that make that situation more or less safe.

*Every bad situation is a result of decisions that were made earlier, by a variety of people, not just the driver.*

When they’re focused on creating a safer total work experience, we can see it. It’s evident in how they manage shipper relations, handle natural disasters, track downtime, and measure manager performance. In a fleet that’s truly focused on safety:

- Ops will routinely route drivers away from potential safety issues such as bad weather and



other disruptions that could cause problems.

- Sales and customer service staff work closely and consistently with customers to improve the pickup and drop off experience and hold them accountable when they don't.
- Maintenance makes choices that improve the safety experience, even if it seems more costly in the short run.
- Executives have defined a business strategy that encourages those departments to do those things and supports their decisions.

Most importantly, we see company leadership demonstrating a safety-focused approach to everything they do, whether or not it has anything to do with drivers. For those companies, it's as if management asks, "What would the general public think if they saw us doing this?" and conducts themselves so there's always a positive response to that question.

Having seen many safety-focused people at industry events, I've seen first-hand that they

comport themselves the same way whether they're in front of drivers or attending a social event. There's a reason why some companies routinely make the Best Fleets Top 20 and win safety awards as well, and that top-to-bottom company commitment to providing a safe, positive workplace is certainly part of it.

If leadership models safety-oriented behavior, and if all departments work together to demonstrate that they're thinking about it as well (demonstrate it, not just talk about it), then the message resonates much more deeply, and the effects are felt across the whole organization.

Creating a truly safety-focused business is a lot more than just keeping people safe when they're driving, but when it's done right the effects are obvious and the results are clear. Drivers know it, and we know it when we look at these fleets. And that never gets old...no matter how many times I see it!





# Before the Lawyers Show Up: How smart fleets bulletproof their driver files

June 4, 2025

We all know that drivers need to have a bunch of documents on file, including the Medical Examiner's Certificate, hours of service records, and employment history. But too often, those files are treated like a formality or a bureaucratic hurdle. The reality? Incomplete or sloppy files can become a major liability.

"Realistically, every fleet that operates in the U.S. is going to find themselves in court at some point," said Dirk Kubar, founder and CEO of TruckRight, in the [CarriersEdge webinar Inside Driver Qualification](#). "So, you can't say, 'It's not going to happen to me.'"

And when something does happen—especially a catastrophic collision—plaintiff attorneys will go straight to your driver files. If they find gaps, inconsistencies, or superficial checks, you've already lost ground.

## What the law actually requires (and what most fleets still miss)

The best fleets don't wait for audits to care about compliance. They build habits that catch problems

early, before they become costly. That doesn't mean creating more paperwork. It means treating the driver file as what it really is: a risk management tool.

**Don't confuse policy with regulation.** Kubar noted that safety and recruiting staff often inherit company practices without realizing they may not meet FMCSR requirements. What you were trained to do may not match what's actually in Section 391. To avoid legal exposure, double-check that your internal policies are aligned with the federal rulebook, not just habit or hearsay.

*Realistically, every fleet that operates in the U.S. is going to find themselves in court at some point, so you can't say, 'It's not going to happen to me.'"*

And while it's tempting to treat compliance as a checklist, the fleets that get it right understand it's a system. The file isn't just a file; it's proof. Of your hiring decisions, of your safety practices, and of how seriously you take your responsibilities.

## The 8 easy-to-miss mistakes that can blow up in court

Even experienced fleets make these mistakes, often without realizing it:

- Incomplete employment verifications or lack of documented attempts
- Missing or unread MVRs, PSPs, CVORs—failure to cross-reference
- Annual reviews that are inconsistent or missing altogether
- “Checkbox compliance”—meaning only confirming that a document exists and conducting no meaningful investigation
- Missing Medical Examiner’s Certificate
- Missing road test
- Safety Performance History not requested, or not checked against FMCSA Clearinghouse
- Driver’s Statement of On-Duty Hours overlooked at hire

All documents must be retained for the duration of the driver’s employment and for three years after termination. That includes MVRs, annual reviews, certificate of violations, and safety performance inquiries.

### Compliance starts with Section 391

Before you start fixing files, it helps to understand what you’re being measured against. For U.S. fleets—and Canadian carriers operating cross-border—FMCSR Part 391 sets the standard. It defines which documents must go into a driver qualification file, how long they need to be kept, and what needs to happen during onboarding and annual reviews. That includes application forms, MVRs, safety performance history, road tests or CDL verification, medical certification, annual reviews, and more.

It sounds straightforward, but as Kubar points out, the misconceptions about 391 are widespread. From “truck stop lawyers” offering informal interpretations, to fleets confusing policy with regulation, it’s easy to overlook what’s actually required.

## How to catch file problems before a regulator—or lawyer—does

Most fleets only discover file issues when it’s too late, either during an insurance renewal, a government audit, or a courtroom deposition. The solution? Document everything, assign responsibility, and run mock audits.

### If it’s not documented, it didn’t happen—at least in court

Knowing the rule isn’t enough. You also need to show your work. Every gap, fix, and decision should have a paper trail. It is as literal as it sounds:

- Missing something? Document it and explain why.
- Can’t verify an employer? Log all attempts and report non-responses to FMCSA.
- If you reached out three times and didn’t get a response, write it down.
- Updating an old file? Don’t just plug in a fresh road test. Explain why and when it was being added.

Delayed or missing employment verifications create a compliance gap and a legal liability. Kubar recommends reporting unresponsive previous employers to FMCSA, not just because it’s required, but because it creates a legal record that you made the effort. According to Kubar, fleets that report non-responses to FMCSA “get a callback almost every time.”

### Who should own your driver files? (hint: not just recruiting)

Compliance falls apart when it’s no one’s clear responsibility. When multiple teams are involved in hiring and onboarding, it’s natural for gaps to appear, especially when everyone’s moving quickly to get drivers on the road. That’s why you need someone whose sole focus is the integrity of those files.

Kubar recommends assigning driver file oversight to a dedicated processor—someone trained, empowered, and detail-obsessed. In small fleets, that might be a part-time role. In larger fleets, it may support multiple people. Either way, it needs to



be someone who chases every loose end.

## How mock audits help you avoid costly verdicts and fines

Mock audits are one of the most valuable—and underused—tools for keeping driver files clean. They let you catch problems before a regulator, insurer, or plaintiff attorney does.

Start by reviewing 10–15% of your driver qualification files like an auditor would. Are all documents present, current, and properly signed? Do the application, MVR, and PSP align? If everything looks good, great. If not, expand your sample and keep digging until you're confident.

*You don't need perfect files. You need a repeatable process—and proof that you're following it*

When you find a gap, like a missing road test or unsigned review, don't quietly fix it and move on. Document what's missing, when you found it, and what steps you're taking to correct it. "Reviewed April 4. Reference check missing. Added recruiter checklist" is enough to show improvement.

If a document truly can't be recovered—say, a road test from 10 years ago—don't backfill. Instead, note the absence, explain what you did to locate it, and outline how your process has changed. That level of transparency builds credibility. Quiet patchwork does the opposite.

**Example:** A fleet finds missing reference checks during a mock audit. They document the issue, note the date, and add a corrective plan. That simple paper trail can help mitigate legal risk later.

Annual reviews aren't just about violations. They're a natural opportunity to check file completeness and fix lingering gaps before someone else notices them.

As Kubar shared in the webinar, mock trials hosted by safety associations make it painfully clear what happens when records are sloppy. The most common issues? Missing documentation, unclear procedures, or signs that files were patched after an incident.

The takeaway: you don't need perfect files. You need a repeatable process and proof that you're

following it. "Auditors and attorneys aren't just looking for flawless records," said Kubar. "They're looking for signs that you have a system."

## How to turn driver files into your strongest legal defense

### Make your file reviews smarter

File reviews are not just checklists you tick and formalities you need to get done with. That mentality invites trouble, said Kubar.

Instead of asking, "Do we have the MVR and PSP?" ask, "Do these align with the application? Are there unexplained gaps, undisclosed employers, or mismatched violations?"

Red flags to watch for:

- A conviction linked to a carrier not listed on the driver's resume
- Discrepancies between MVR and PSP
- Employment history that skips a job where an incident occurred

Cross-reference everything. If a driver lists ABC Trucking for 2022–23, but the PSP record shows a violation with XYZ Freight in that same period, something's off.

As of 2023, the FMCSA Clearinghouse can replace manual outreach for drug and alcohol results, another useful step toward simplifying pre-employment checks.

*Instead of asking, "Do we have the MVR and PSP?" ask, "Do these align with the application? Are there unexplained gaps, undisclosed employers, or mismatched violations?"*

### Better files = better hiring decisions

Hiring criteria, especially around MVR thresholds, not only guide decision-making but also protect against discrimination claims. Apply the same standard every time.

Good documentation helps you:

- Defend yourself in lawsuits

- Spot risky hires before they're behind the wheel
- Avoid onboarding surprises
- Build long-term training and risk management strategies

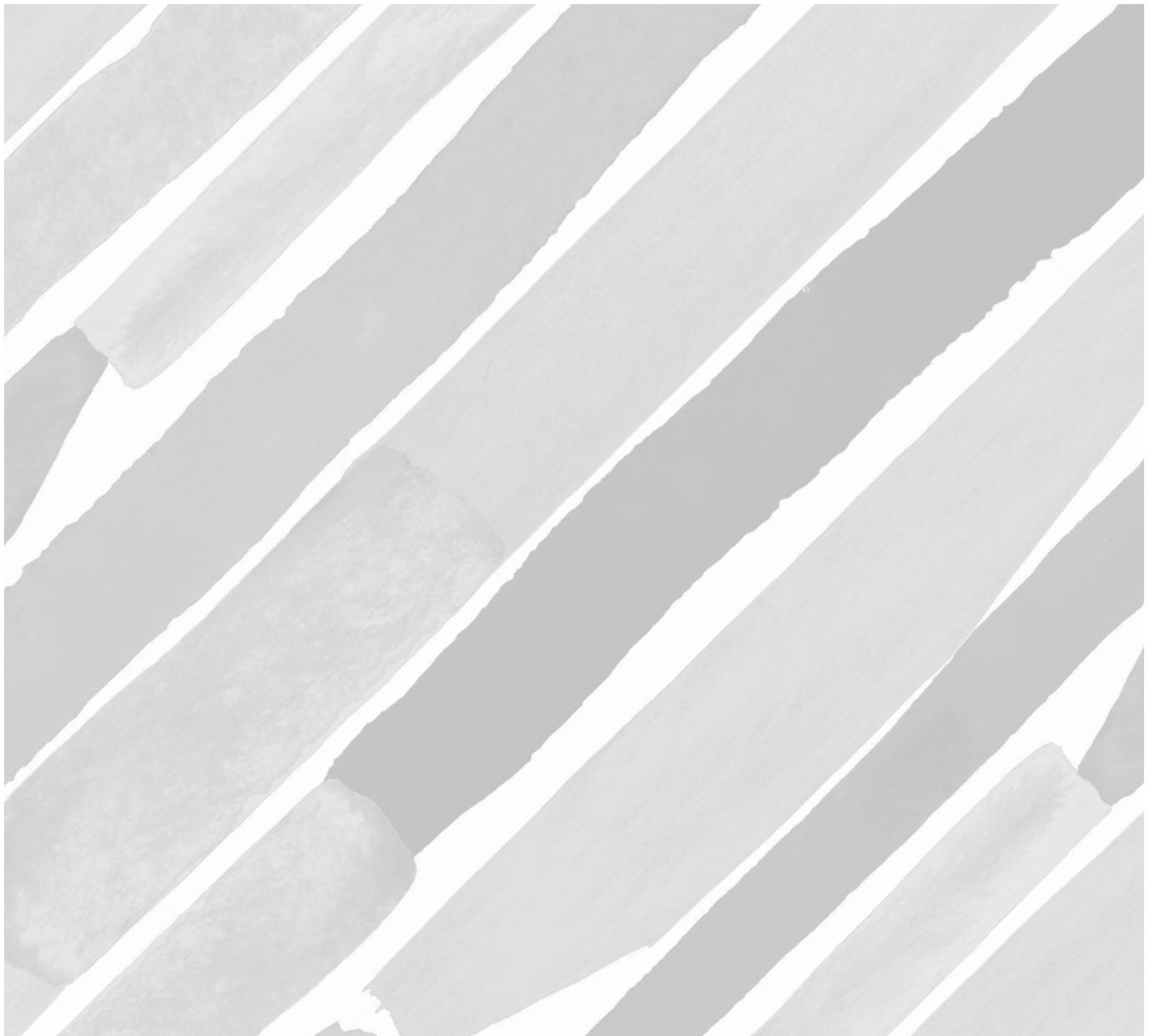
Better files also make it easier to uphold policies, whether it's for hours of service, hazmat training, or performance reviews.

## **Make this the year you stop treating driver files like a formality**

Driver qualification files aren't just a compliance exercise. They're a cornerstone of risk management.

And when plaintiff attorneys come calling, the fleets with clean, consistent documentation are the ones that come out ahead.

Don't wait for the lawsuit. Start strengthening your files now. In this industry, it's not a matter of if, but when.





# Sidestepping Inspection Pitfalls: How to keep trucks rolling

April 2, 2025

If there's one thing fleet safety professionals don't need, it's another surprise at the weigh station. What seems like a straightforward pit stop can quickly spiral into a costly delay, with inspectors scrutinizing paperwork, closely checking equipment, and throwing schedules off track. So, what's prompting the extra scrutiny? To help you prepare your fleets for this year's Roadcheck in May, CarriersEdge sat down with industry experts Bud Kneller and Alf Brown of Frontline Commercial Vehicle Solutions to break down how to keep your fleet rolling smoothly past inspections.

## Understanding inspection triggers

Kneller and Brown know commercial vehicle enforcement inside and out. With decades of experience as enforcement officers, trainers, and regulatory experts, they've seen exactly why some trucks get flagged while others roll through. Now, as independent compliance consultants, they help

fleets navigate inspections and stay on the right

side of the law.

## It's about safety, not just tickets

A common misconception is that inspectors are just out to write tickets. But as Brown emphasizes, their priority is road safety. "Officers won't spend an hour inspecting a truck that's in perfect shape while ten bad ones go by," he explains.

Kneller agrees that enforcement is about supporting fleets that invest in safety. "We want to reward the companies who do good maintenance, train their drivers, and plan their trips so they're not running over hours."

## Red flags that trigger inspection

Inspectors don't check every truck that rolls in. They scan for red flags first:

- Speeding into the scale – Trucks flying in over the limit stand out.
- Messy paperwork – Cluttered or incomplete records raise suspicion.
- Obvious mechanical problems – Faulty lights, worn tires, or leaking air lines are easy to spot.



- Poor safety rating – If a fleet’s violation rate is bad, expect extra attention.

Promote cleanliness and compliance to set your team up for success.

## Keeping your fleet running smoothly

As a fleet safety professional or owner-operator, you’ve got plenty of tools in your toolkit to keep your trucks from getting flagged. Knowing the ins and outs of the inspection process—and proactively managing your fleet—helps your trucks breeze through weigh stations without the headaches of costly delays.

### Slowing down matters at the scale

When it comes to weigh stations, it’s all about taking it slow and steady. Remind your drivers: inspectors notice trucks that stand out, especially those rushing into scales. Speeding trucks don’t just catch attention; they disrupt weigh-in-motion scales, prompting inspectors to pull your drivers aside for closer scrutiny.

Kneller explains that weigh-in-motion scales are sensitive, and speeding trucks throw off their readings: “You’re gonna make our screen a blur, which means I definitely have to stop you, talk to you, and maybe take you over to the other scale where I weigh you per plate as opposed to using the weigh-in-motion scale.”

Teaching your drivers to ease into weigh stations at the posted speed helps your fleet glide through quickly.

### Your trucks do the talking

First impressions matter at weigh stations. And your trucks will speak louder than your drivers ever can. Inspectors typically give presentable vehicles a quick glance, letting them pass smoothly, while those showing signs of neglect draw immediate scrutiny.

Motivate drivers to maintain clean cabs, tidy up paperwork, and present themselves professionally.

As Brown explains, “If the truck looked well-maintained, if the driver looked like he was alert, paying attention, in all likelihood, we may just give him the green light, have him leave the scale.”

On the other hand, sending drivers out in trucks with cluttered cabs or chaotic documents invites unnecessary inspection delays. Prioritize regular checks and establish clear standards for vehicle cleanliness and documentation.

### Neat paperwork keeps trucks moving

One of the quickest ways to trigger a longer inspection is by fumbling through messy paperwork or not knowing which documents they need.

Enforcement officers expect drivers to provide records quickly and accurately. If a driver hesitates or seems unsure, it can signal a lack of proper training or attention to compliance, often leading to a more thorough inspection.

Your job as a manager is to make sure drivers know exactly which documents they need and keep them neatly organized.

*Drivers can do everything right, but if the fleet isn't prioritizing maintenance and compliance, it won't matter.*

### The 60-second inspection: Preparing your fleet

Inspectors usually start with a quick, 60-second walk-around, looking for obvious issues. Consistently stress these crucial checkpoints:

- Lights, wheels, rims, and tires – Regularly confirm these are in good condition.
- Annual inspection stickers – Ensure they’re current, clearly visible and properly placed.
- Air leaks – Train drivers to listen for audible hissing during their pre-trips.

Catching issues like broken lights, worn tires, or leaking air lines before trucks leave the yard helps keep inspections brief, vehicles moving, and operations on track.

### Your fleet’s safety record makes a difference

Your company’s safety rating plays a big role in how long your inspection takes.

Kneller puts it plainly, “If your safety rating is bad, your plate will light up red on our system, and there’s a much higher chance we’ll pull you in, even if your truck looks okay.”

Drivers can do everything right, but if the fleet isn't prioritizing maintenance and compliance, it won't matter. A bad score means more inspections.

## **During and after the inspection**

### **Professionalism matters—train for it**

Your drivers' attitudes during inspections can make all the difference. Training your drivers to stay calm, cooperate fully, and promptly provide whatever inspectors request helps move things along and avoids adding tension to the process.

Brown acknowledges that enforcement understands a driver's frustration, but it's a two-way street: "In a lot of cases, they come out of the truck hot. They're mad. They want to just keep rolling. And we want them to understand that officers have a job to do just like they have a job to do. And, like I said, first impressions go a long way."

Bottom line for managers: A steady, cooperative approach helps keep the inspection efficient, whereas impatience only drags it out.

### **Skipped pre-trip inspections are costly**

Every safety professional knows the stories: avoidable fines due to small oversight, like a missing container of coolant tucked away in the truck's toolbox or registration cards left behind in the boss's truck 10 feet away.

Make thorough pre-trip inspections a non-negotiable part of your drivers' routines. Spending 30-45 minutes carefully checking vehicles before departure is your fleet's best protection against unnecessary fines and frustrating delays.

### **When inspections go wrong**

Even when your fleet does everything right, mistakes can still happen. If a driver receives what seems like an unfair fine or inaccurate violation, don't let it slide. Escalate it to the enforcement agency right away.

As Kneller points out: "Enforcement agencies can't fix what they don't know is happening." Some officers may not be fully up to speed on commercial vehicle regulations, and calling attention to errors not only corrects the record. It can also drive broader change. Serious issues may even lead to an All-Chiefs Bulletin, prompting province- or state-

wide clarification for enforcement officers.

Encourage your drivers to speak up if something seems incorrect. Addressing errors can lead to positive outcomes, benefiting your entire fleet and the industry.

## **Pro tips for fleet managers to ensure smoother inspections**

- **Prepare your drivers:** Train your drivers to expect inspections every trip. Keeping them prepared cuts down on stress and saves everyone valuable time.
- **Prioritize maintenance:** Remind your drivers and maintenance team to tackle issues early. Don't settle for "good enough." Small problems quickly become big headaches at weigh stations.
- **Avoid shortcuts:** Insist on thorough pre-trips and discourage hiding defects. Inspectors can easily spot shortcuts, especially obvious issues like tire failures right after leaving the yard.
- **Promote professionalism:** Instill in your drivers the importance of staying calm and cooperative. A professional approach can make inspections go shorter and faster.
- **Keep documentation tidy:** Encourage your fleet to keep paperwork neat, updated, and easily accessible. Organized paperwork makes inspections quicker and avoids unnecessary hassles.
- **Educate on rights:** Make sure your drivers know how to respectfully challenge anything unfair or incorrect. Raising these issues not only helps your fleet but also improves standards across the industry.

## **Stay ready—with or without a blitz**

The annual Roadcheck blitzes keep fleets and drivers on high alert. These announced inspections have a positive effect, encouraging drivers to stick to their hours of service and stay on top of pre-trips. But as a fleet manager, you know compliance isn't just for blitz weeks. Keep safety and organization front and center year-round, and inspections will become routine rather than stressful events.

# TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT



# Learning Management Part I: Blue collar, white collar, and post-secondary

Mark Murrell  
January 8, 2025

As of 2025, I've been designing and building learning management systems for 25 years. Yes, I am old. A lot has changed in that time, and the current state of technology and Internet speeds lets us do things we never imagined possible back then, but many of the fundamentals haven't really changed much.

We talk a lot about safety and general training best practices in this space, but it's worth zooming in on the system underneath: learning management. It's often hidden behind the scenes, an unseen helper or antagonist, but it's a critical part of a successful training program.

When I first started designing learning management systems (LMS), the Internet was brand new and was just starting to allow significant numbers of people to be trained online in a short period. That meant that something was needed to track all that training. The LMS allowed for that tracking, but it quickly grew into something much more than just a log of activities. It soon started to develop in ways that were very specific to the environments in which it was being used, and those differences are now

really distinct.

In trucking, we've reached a point where online training has become a standard tool. Recent [Best Fleets to Drive For®](#) data shows that, for the first time ever, it's now the default training delivery method across the industry.

With fleets getting increasingly serious about their online training activities, the LMS becomes critical. Knowing what an LMS offers—and which types suit your fleet—can make or break your online training success.

In this two-part series, we'll take a closer look at what makes a learning management system successful in trucking. Part I explores the basics and why trucking's needs are different from white collar and post-secondary environments. Part II digs into what a trucking LMS really needs to do.

## Start with the basics

At its core, an LMS has three main components – users, courses, and the activity of users in those courses. It's basically a matching system, connecting users to courses and keeping track of what they do together.

Some systems are very simple, tracking only that a



user completed a course on a specific date. Some are very granular, tracking every training element that a user views or engages with, how long they spend on each thing, every answer they submit, and geolocating them when they do it.

At the foundation, though, they're matching users and courses, and tracking activity.

*Learning management is often hidden behind the scenes, an unseen helper (or antagonist), but a critical part of a successful training program.*

In the beginning, that was just fine. When systems had very few courses and a fixed number of users, there wasn't much more to do. However, once course libraries started expanding, and the users interacting with training exploded, systems quickly evolved to be more powerful, but also more specific in use.

Instead of just tracking who did what when, they shifted focus to who should be or could be doing what, when it should happen, and whether it actually happened.

One of the first commercially successful systems, Saba (now part of Cornerstone), tracked all the job roles in a company and the training requirements for each. As a result, it was easy to see what training people needed when they moved into a new position. Workers could also see what was required for jobs they aspired to and get started working on it in advance.

That's just one example, but it starts to highlight the differences between systems designed for different audiences.

## Different worlds, different systems

Saba was a great example of a "white-collar" LMS, a system designed for office workers and their specific education needs. Most off-the-shelf commercial LMS are designed for white-collar audiences, but there are other audiences who have distinct needs as well.

When we compare those audiences, and the systems designed for them, it's easy to see why

some of them absolutely do not work in trucking.

### White collar

In the white-collar world, training tends to be self-directed or learner-led. Workers are thinking about their careers, what they need to do to advance, and how they can improve their skills to move up the corporate ladder. Systems designed to serve that audience have distinct characteristics:

- They assume people will spend time learning how to navigate the system and seek out content they're after. Interfaces have a lot more text explaining things, and there are tools for keeping notes, glossaries, indexes, and other things that are useful when users return regularly.
- All or most of the content is available for users to see and engage with. Search tools let people explore different courses and try them out if they want to.
- For things that aren't immediately available, there are tools to request participation. Users can register for a physical course and initiate a workflow requesting approval from their manager.
- Content delivery assumes that users are tech-savvy, on newer computers with high-speed connections, and accessing from a finite number of locations.
- Reporting is focused on who completed what and tends to be more basic.

*Knowing what an LMS offers—and which types suit your fleet—can make or break your online training success*

### Blue collar

The blue-collar world, in many ways, is the complete opposite. Training tends to be more regulated and compliance-based, rather than career-based and aspirational, so the focus is on getting it done, with as little hassle as possible. Systems designed for this audience have their own characteristics:

- The interface is much simpler and more direct, showing people only the things they need to complete their tasks.

- Since users are doing what they're required to, not what they're necessarily interested in, they may seek shortcuts or ways to cheat the system. Protections and limits may be required to ensure everyone does what they're supposed to do.
- There may be renewal requirements, or other time constraints, so management needs more tools to see what deadlines are coming up, who's expiring, whether they're renewing, and various other related details.
- Outside entities may periodically audit or review activities, so tools for managing and demonstrating compliance are needed.
- Content delivery can't make assumptions about the tech literacy of the audience, the quality of their computers or connections, or where they're connecting from.

## Post-secondary

The post-secondary world has its own characteristics, overlapping the above in some ways and completely different in others. Like the white-collar approach, it assumes students are motivated by career goals. But like the blue-collar model, it also involves strict requirements for graduation. Systems designed to serve this audience build on the core post-secondary assumptions with their own unique attributes:

- Education is instructor-led, rather than self-paced, with assignments given out and marked by professors, and taking place in a fixed period.
- Building on the old correspondence course model, content is heavily text-based with fewer interactive elements.
- Major assessment activities (like exams) are monitored or proctored to prevent cheating.
- Instructors may assign and grade coursework, but often don't track whether participants submit, complete, or pass it.
- Participants only see the content they're registered for and may be able to search out other options but won't be able to access it without registering directly.
- Reporting tends to be more focused on registration (to balance workloads) and course completion. Proof of attendance and

completion for students may be required occasionally, but it's not a major element.

- Content delivery can require specific computer and network minimums.

## Why trucking needs its own

Comparing the three models, you can see that the main differences often come down to who cares most about what's happening, and what it is they care about.

In the white-collar and post-secondary models, the learner cares most and they want to capitalize on the opportunity.

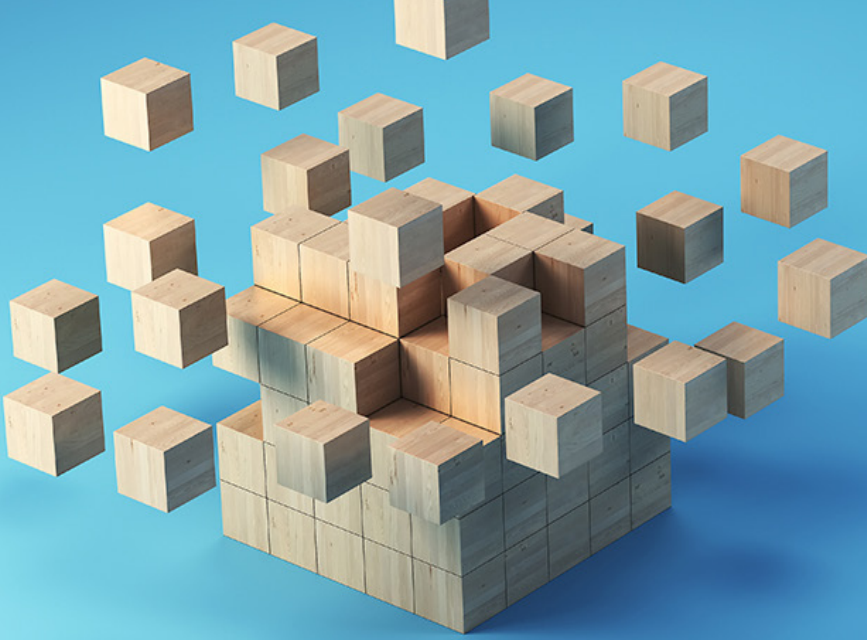
In the blue-collar model, on the other hand, management and outside auditors care most, and they need to ensure the learners are completing the right things at the right time.

Based on that, it's easy to see why white-collar and post-secondary models don't really work for trucking. Some fleets still use systems built for those environments, but it's a square peg in a round hole, and it rarely works.

However, while trucking needs learning management designed for blue collar, that's not enough on its own. The industry's unique complexities demand a system tailored specifically for trucking.

In part II we'll take a closer look at what a trucking LMS needs to deliver.





# Learning Management Part II: Why trucking is different

February 5, 2025

In part I, we looked at the basics of learning management and how different systems are designed to serve very different audiences. I finished by noting that while trucking works best with a “blue-collar” model, that’s only part of the equation.

In part II, let’s dig into the specific requirements that make a trucking LMS different, and what fleets should look for when choosing a system.

First, there are some things common to the blue-collar model that need to be handled with extra care for trucking.

## Blue-collar features

### Knowledge testing

Knowledge testing is particularly delicate in the blue-collar model. Systems designed for white-collar or post-secondary audiences typically assume user comfort with technology and strong literacy. With those assumptions, they can employ a range of different testing types—multiple choice, short

answer, even essay questions can work well.

*Today's fleets need learning management designed from the ground up to serve their specific requirements*

The blue-collar world, however, is very different. Users may not have strong computer (or even language) literacy, so fill-in-the-blanks or written answers tend to be problematic. Most blue- and white-collar systems rely on automatic grading of tests, so if the user writes in an answer that’s spelled wrong, or they use slightly different wording to describe something, the question gets marked as wrong when it really shouldn’t be. They end up testing someone’s spelling or typing abilities more than their content knowledge, which defeats the purpose.

Manually graded tests aren’t really an option either. It’s fine for pros to be reading and marking written tests, but in the blue-collar world I’ve yet to come across a manager who has that kind of time.

Pretty much the only testing method that reliably works for trucking is multiple choice. The options need to be clearly presented to the user so they

can view the question and the answer options, then choose which one they think is correct. (Writing good multiple-choice questions is an art of its own, which we'll cover in a future piece.)

## Compliance and audits

Support for compliance tracking and audits may be a requirement in many blue-collar systems, but it's extra important in trucking. With multiple enforcement agencies and insurance reps regularly wanting to verify training records and history, fleets need to be able to pull up training records quickly, those records need to be accurate, and they should be detailed as well.

While many blue-collar learning management systems track compliance—whether users are currently up to date with required training—trucking needs more than that. Fleets often need to show that drivers were compliant at specific points in the past or have never been out of compliance. That goes well beyond what's available in most general purpose LMS.

## Small company support

This is an area where both blue- and white-collar systems can overlap, but it's particularly important in trucking. Many white-collar systems, and a lot of blue-collar ones too, are designed for “enterprise”—large companies with thousands of employees and dedicated training managers. Trucking, on the other hand, has thousands of small companies without dedicated training managers.

Systems designed for enterprise are very different than those designed for smaller companies. With dedicated training managers who spend all day logged in to the system, big companies want power-user features and they're okay with clunky interfaces that take time to learn.

Small companies are the opposite. With “training managers” also managing multiple other functions in the company, they need easy-to-use systems that give them the basics and let them get their tasks done quickly. If they only have an hour a week to focus on this, they don't want to spend that relearning the interface.

## Trucking-specific features

Trucking also has some characteristics that aren't

commonly seen in other blue-collar environments and need to be handled properly.

## Drivers, Safety, and Ops

In trucking, Safety and Ops kind of oversee drivers together. Ops may have responsibility for the individual drivers (acting as the direct managers for them) but Safety is also there, on the side, overseeing programs and outlining what should be done to stay compliant and minimize the fleet's risk profile.

Learning management for trucking needs to recognize and support all three groups effectively. Safety may be the one setting up the programs and deciding what should be done, but Ops needs to be in the loop. They need to know what's required of their drivers, who's getting it done, and who isn't. The LMS needs to support all those requirements and make it easy for everyone to see what they need to see without a lot of manual work or excess data.

*Fleets often need to show that drivers were compliant at specific points in the past or have never been out of compliance. That goes well beyond what's available in most general purpose LMS.*

## Driver reassignment

It's not uncommon for drivers to get moved from one fleet manager to another as their routes change. When that happens, their training requirements and supervisors may change as well. Most learning management systems assume workers are fairly static in their locations and roles, so they have minimal features to streamline the process of making changes.

To effectively serve the trucking industry, an LMS needs to not only make it easy to change manager and location assignments, but training requirements as well. If a driver moves from one customer to another, their training requirements may change. If they move from regional to local or cross-border work, they may need completely different training. The LMS needs to handle that and automatically



update the assignments consistently and reliably.

## Driver turnover

All blue-collar environments have employee turnover to deal with, but trucking is uncommon because a significant percentage of those exits return at some point in the future. Fleets commonly delete accounts when drivers leave, but when those people return it's better to undelete the old account rather than creating a brand new one.

Since that driver likely completed training during the previous employment, that history should come back, too. Forcing returning drivers to repeat training because their history was wiped is a waste of time—and a dealbreaker for most fleets.

A trucking LMS needs to seamlessly handle drivers quitting and returning, making it easy to remove accounts when drivers leave, reactivate when they return, and retaining all training history accurately to expedite onboarding.

*A trucking LMS needs to seamlessly handle drivers quitting and returning, making it easy to remove accounts when drivers leave, reactivate when they return, and retaining all training history accurately to expedite onboarding.*

Even if those drivers don't return, that history may be needed in the future for lawsuits or when audits come up. It's critical to keep it available but not clutter up the interface with records for people not currently employed at the fleet.

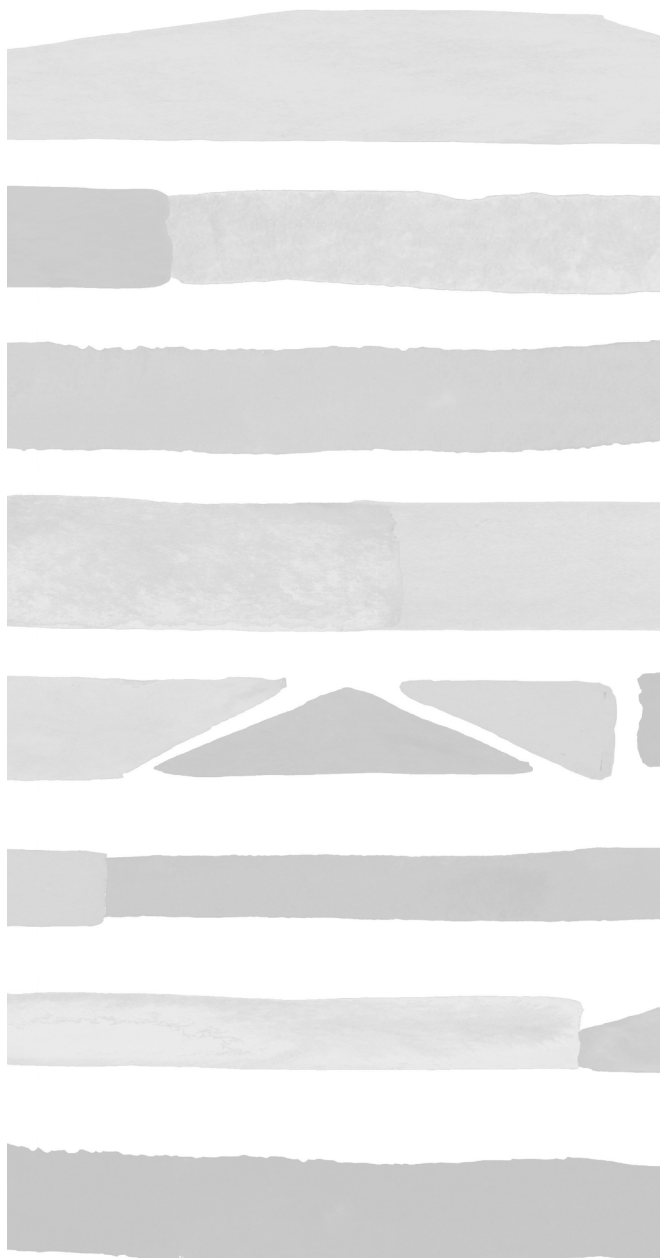
## Dashcams and telematics

The base assumption for all types of LMS is that a human is deciding the training requirements for a given population of workers, but in trucking that's no longer the case. With telematics and dashcams highlighting gaps in driver skills and knowledge, machines are increasingly involved in the process and fleets need ways to integrate them easily.

A trucking LMS needs to recognize that both human administrators and outside systems will be identifying training needs, and it needs to have ways for fleets to get both groups working together

towards the same goal. Auto-assigning training is necessary, but the human managers need to be in the loop as well, so they always know what's going on.

Those are some reasons why trucking is very different from other industries, but they're just the beginning. Put it all together and you can see why today's fleets need learning management designed from the ground up to serve their specific requirements. Anything else will just waste time or limit the effectiveness of the training programs.





# Driver Training and Stand-Up Comedy:

## A surprising lesson in listening

November 6, 2024

If you're a fan of stand-up comedy, have you noticed the best comics connect with their audience through stories based on their life experiences? They also often tell one-off jokes on the fly, depending on what's happening during a show.

But, when comedians engage with the audience and craft some of the material to the city they're performing in, it feels more personal. They did their homework and took the time to connect with the audience. They cared.

When it comes to driver training, there are similarities in the way comedians engage with their audiences and the best practices driver trainers use to teach and engage with their drivers. You don't have to necessarily be funny - these similarities revolve around the ability to observe and listen, and effectively engaging with your audience based on what you see and hear.

In a [CarriersEdge webinar on listening and observation skills](#), Jane Jazrawy broke down ways trainers can listen and observe more effectively, so drivers get more from the training.

### Read the room during training

Just like a good comedian reacts to their audience in real-time, as a driver trainer, you should too. Instead of reading straight from your slides about your topic, find opportunities to engage and observe how people are reacting to the material. By asking questions and having open discussions, you increase the likelihood that drivers stay focused and engaged. When people sit and listen to you speak for an hour straight, they can easily get distracted or tune you out. Sure, there will always be topics that are more boring or monotonous in nature than others. And some drivers, regardless of what you do, will have trouble paying attention.

Mixing in group or partner activities to discuss or practice concepts you teach can help drivers stay focused and retain the information. Just remember, during these activities, don't ask your audience to "put themselves into groups". No one likes to feel like they're scrambling to find a group or partner to join and potentially experiencing the awkwardness of being left out.

For those drivers who like to be on their phones or talk among each other when you're speaking, don't try to tune it out or overreact. Be aware of the situation and simply try moving closer to the people

involved while you're presenting. Your presence, being physically closer to them, is a sure way to get them to stop whatever it is that they're doing. It works like a charm.

## Ask, don't tell

Throughout your training, ask your audience questions to gauge how well they understand the material. Not only will this give you feedback on driver comprehension, asking questions also allows them the opportunity to make connections on their own. When you propose a question and have trouble getting volunteers to answer—or you see blank stares from your audience—that's a red light. You need to spend some additional time on that particular subject.

*Connection is an important part of learning, so using what you see and hear can help you be more effective as a trainer*

When no one volunteers to answer questions, you can try asking simpler questions and calling on drivers to respond. Try to make sure they have success with this approach, but if they can answer easier questions, you can get them used to talking. They may not like it at first, but having that open dialogue is key in aiding a driver's comprehension and it helps the trainer understand the level of confidence drivers have in a particular subject.

When you ask questions, avoid closed questions that provoke a 'yes or no' response. They don't give you much information. When you ask, 'Are you ready to move on?' or 'Does everyone understand?' before moving to the next subject, most people say yes or nod their heads. They may not understand the material, but they see questions as slowing everyone down.

Not only should you ask questions, but encourage drivers to ask their own. It's completely okay if part of the lesson becomes an open conversation between the instructor and audience. Talking through concepts can help drivers relate to the material and tie in personal experiences depending on the subject.

When someone does ask a question, it's essential to focus on what they're saying rather than

continue whatever it is that you're doing. This lets your driver know you are paying attention and that their question matters. You don't want to accidentally make it seem like questions aren't important. When you don't have an answer off the top of your head, it's okay to pause and take a minute to formulate a response. If you don't have an answer, let the driver know you need to think about it more and will get back to them.

People need to feel comfortable in the classroom and should feel like they always have the opportunity to feel 'heard.' As they say, there's no such thing as a dumb question.

When you do answer a question, watch how they react to your response. Do they agree with what you said? Look confused? Follow up by asking if what you said made sense or if you answered their question before moving on. It's possible that you may have answered only part of their question or misheard it altogether. When that happens, ask the driver to repeat the question so you can take another crack at it.

## Make virtual training interactive

While it's much easier to gauge how drivers are responding to training in the classroom, virtual training through Zoom or Teams makes it much more challenging to know how well drivers are picking up the material. That's especially the case if cameras are turned off and yours is on...it can feel like you're talking into the void.

If you're teaching a group of 3 or less, even when your audience has their cameras off, encourage them to unmute their audio connection. This is helpful so that even when you can't see them, you can pick up audio queues, like groans or comments like 'Oh, that makes sense.' They are useful to hear and can help decide how to move forward with your material. When you have a large class size, anyone who isn't speaking should mute their audio; otherwise, too much outside noise will be distracting for everyone.

Just because you're giving a lesson virtually doesn't mean you should refrain from asking questions throughout or providing opportunities to ask their own. Utilize the chat box and ask questions there. Proposing poll questions is another great way to drive engagement with your audience and see what

the consensus is with a particular subject. Don't be afraid to get creative with the types of questions you use when you're presenting remotely.

*When no one volunteers to answer questions, you can try asking simpler questions and calling on drivers to respond.*

## Lead better 1-on-1 conversations

While some 1-on-1 conversations with drivers are relaxed, others, especially if they pertain to a safety-related issue, can be more difficult. For example, when a driver is repeatedly ignoring or breaking safety procedures or had an at-fault collision, checking emotions at the door before you meet with the driver is important. Sure, you may be angry, but displaying that anger in a meeting can quickly turn combative. The point of these types of meetings is to correct the root cause of the issue, and beginning the meeting off on the wrong foot won't help. Plan ahead before a meeting by thinking of the types of questions you're going to ask and how you want to steer the conversation. Following through with that plan can help you stay on course. It can also help prevent unwanted emotions from taking over.

When you discover there's a training-related issue, work with the driver to see where the issue lies. Are they often distracted during lessons? Is there a language barrier? Or are they having trouble grasping a particular concept and need additional coursework or 1-1 help? These issues can all be resolved once you identify the root cause. As a trainer, it's important to communicate with your drivers about why the training you provide is necessary to keep them, and your company operating safely.

## Ask for feedback, get better

There is always room for improvement in anything you do. As a trainer, don't be afraid to ask your drivers for honest feedback. Whether it's asking drivers at the end of a lesson what their thoughts were or issuing surveys or polls about the training you provide, it is key. As an instructor, you should be open-minded about how you teach and find creative ways to adapt your skills to deliver training

that best registers with your drivers.

Remember the example of the comedian who tailors their jokes to the city where they perform? You don't have to be able to tell jokes, but when you make a conscious effort to observe and listen to your audience when you deliver training, you can learn a lot about how to connect with them. Connection is an important part of learning, so using what you see and hear can help you be more effective as a trainer.







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