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RocketCDL

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# Nail the Three Rs:

## Recruiting, Referrals, and Retention



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**D**river recruiting and retention has been a top industry issue for well over a decade. Finding the right, qualified driver begins with the applicant experience, which lasts well beyond the initial recruiting conversations. From hiring to onboarding to training, the first 90+ days of the new driver experience are critical to improving driver satisfaction and retention.

Communication, transparency, and company culture are critical to a driver-first recruiting and retaining strategy, and this is where the three R's come into play. In a recent panel discussion, Jeremy Reymer, Founder and CEO at DriverReach, along with industry experts Nate Tellis, CTO and Co-Founder at RocketCDL, and Max Farrell, CEO and Co-Founder at WorkHound, gathered to discuss strategies for the three R's and how recruiting teams can focus on these areas.

***This ebook will delve into each of the three Rs – recruiting, referrals, and retention – and uncover time-tested strategies for each.***



**Jeremy Reymer,**  
Founder and CEO at  
DriverReach



**Nate Tellis,**  
CTO and Co-Founder at  
RocketCDL



**Max Farrell,**  
CEO and Co-Founder at  
WorkHound





# Recruiting

## **PILLAR #1 | RECRUITING IS SALES: BETTER CONVERSATIONS = BETTER CONVERSIONS**

The driver shortage is the number one industry issue according to the American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) – and has been for many years. Recruiting is at the center of this challenge, which means driver recruiters play an immensely critical role in attracting qualified candidates to fill empty seats. Having the right type of conversations helps driver applicants feel comfortable and confident that they are pursuing a job that fits their needs long term. In order to accomplish this, recruiters must be empowered and equipped with the tools to have an effective two-way conversation that gets to the heart of what the driver is seeking – benefits like paid time off, health coverage, home time, loyalty incentives, and so on.

**RECRUITING IS SALES.** With so much competition in today's market, recruiters must take a page from the sales team's playbook in order to stand out and attract CDL drivers. No longer can driver recruiters rely solely on inbound leads generated from a variety of job posts. Now more than ever, each conversation a recruiter has with a driver applicant should be centered on ensuring an effortless and memorable experience.



## PILLAR #2 | SPEED-TO-HIRE IS CRITICAL

Trucking is a highly regulated industry, and hiring drivers is complex. This is why removing any obstacles standing in the way of efficiency is essential. One of the most significant costs associated with driver turnover is the opportunity cost for the duration of time that a truck is left empty. The sooner a driver can get through the qualification and hiring process, the less of a negative impact on the bottom line.

First and foremost, it's critical to focus on hiring the new driver. Then, move them through orientation. Once those crucial recruiting steps have occurred, you can begin to work backward to understand the following questions:

- Which lead sources are converting the fastest?
- Where are the most time-consuming roadblocks occurring throughout in the process?

Simply put, if you're not moving fast enough in today's market, you're not going to be successful. Beyond the opportunity cost concerns, if you waste drivers' time during the hiring process, they'll likely decide to work elsewhere – with a carrier that provides a better, faster applicant experience.

***Drivers have many options in today's market, so why should they choose your company?***

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## PILLAR #3 | EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-UP AND COMMUNICATION PRACTICES ARE IMPERATIVE

It's imperative to make it easy for drivers to stay in touch, and if your team is finding it hard to reach or connect with drivers, try a different channel or tactic. The first 90 days of new driver onboarding (like any new hire onboarding) is so critical to the long-term success of the new hire. If a driver feels it is hard to communicate with your team right when they start, they will likely go somewhere else. If a driver feels your company cares about them and their success at your company, they are much more likely to stay.

One of the biggest misconceptions of onboarding is that once information is shared, the new hire is fully equipped to go out on their own and get the job done. In reality, a new driver retains only 10 to 20% of what is shared during early onboarding sessions. Reinforcing messaging with drivers is vital, and so is being readily available for any questions or follow-ups they may have. This is important during early recruiting and onboarding as well as during the later stages of a driver relationship.



# Referrals

## PILLAR #1 | YOUR CURRENT DRIVERS SHOULD BE YOUR NUMBER ONE ADVOCATES

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While many carriers rely on recruiters alone to produce new driver leads and hires, your current drivers are often an untapped resource. Your current drivers joined your organization for a reason, so why not lean on them to help your recruiting strategy?

Compensation strategies and conversion plans are only the beginning. Additional strategies to turn your drivers into #1 advocates include:

- **Investing in different channels and urging your drivers to share their stories.** Encourage drivers on social media to share why they drive with your company.
- **Providing your drivers with the tools and resources they need to effectively 'recruit' for your team.** Drivers will often take it on to themselves to recruit for your organization if you make it easy and fun for them – and incentivize them – to do so.
- **Highlighting different career paths within your organization beyond driving.** From training to mentorship to recruiting, a strong referral program can be the building blocks of different professional development paths.

Recruiters aren't living in the day-to-day of being a driver. As a result, they can be less "believable" when it comes to what a new driver's experience will be like with a new carrier. New drivers are likely to be more responsive and trusting of current drivers, especially when discussing what life on the road is really like.

## PILLAR #2 | COMPANY TRANSPARENCY BUILDS DRIVER TRUST

It can take time and effort to build trust with drivers, but it is critical to the success and the culture of your company. A strong referral program starts with company culture. If your team doesn't have a base of raving fans, most likely it's time to examine your company culture from the top down.

Regardless of your compensation structure, drivers should feel comfortable and willing to bring new driver referrals to recruiters. If they aren't, this could represent a breakdown of company culture, trust, and communication. This trust is a two-way street. Your

organization must trust and empower your drivers to speak to new driver leads or applicants.

One good benchmark to start tracking is the percentage of new leads coming from referrals. This is truly a 'free' channel for recruiting, and it can help move the needle for recruiting initiatives. On average, across the industry, new hires brought in by a referral tend to cost less, get hired faster, and stay on longer. So why are carriers not investing as much in referral programs for their drivers?

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## PILLAR #3 | INSTANT GRATIFICATION ENCOURAGES REFERRALS

***Have you considered rewarding your drivers for their referrals at the point of their submission or when their referral is hired?***

RocketCDL recommends integrating instant gratification into your company's referral program strategy. Instant gratification motivates your drivers to make their first referral and keep referring thereafter. The goal is to keep your drivers referring, so why not reward them when they submit a referral?

The bulk of new driver referrals will most likely come from a small handful of current drivers. These are your power referrals, and oftentimes your top five referrers will be submitting more than half of all referrals that get hired. Invest in these people, and give them stretch goals to achieve!





# Retention

## **PILLAR #1 | RETENTION STARTS WITH COMPANY CULTURE – A COMBINATION OF HABITS AND EFFORTS TO EARN DRIVER TRUST**

A healthy company needs to be able to drive referrals and retain drivers by fostering a culture that drivers want to be a part of. All industries are hungry for new talent, and many organizations are hiding problematic turnover with high-velocity recruiting strategies.

The trucking industry has a 'leaky bucket' recruiting problem. Instead of working at the bottom to determine how to patch the holes – aka developing driver retention strategies – recruiting teams are just filling the bucket with more water, such as driving leads and new hires. While robust recruiting strategies will always be essential, retention is now hyper-critical in today's competitive environment.

Focusing on company culture and taking steps to earn trust with your drivers starts with understanding the difference between showing you have a culture of curiosity and saying 'this is how it's always been'. Organizations looking for ways to leverage new insights and ideas from their employees will be able to gain more effective operational intelligence and instill a sense of trust and loyalty in their employees.

Company culture is reflected in an organization's messaging and how its drivers respond, as well as how long drivers stay with the company.

***Healthy retention means  
a healthy company.***





## PILLAR #2 | THE FIRST 90 DAYS IS A CRITICAL MILESTONE FOR NEW DRIVERS

According to Max at WorkHound, about 50% of drivers who communicated about their training programs in 2021 left their organizations by the end of the year. Recruiting leaders understand that onboarding, training, and first impressions are critical for new hires. This data affirms that effective and comprehensive training can make all the difference in your retention strategy.

Some innovative strategies for building driver trust and satisfaction within the first 90 days of hire include:

- Setting up peer mentorship programs between new hires and tenured drivers
- Developing cross-functional counsels for ongoing idea sharing
- Asking new drivers for feedback early and often
- Ensuring lines of communication are open and available between new hires and whoever they need to contact within the organization

Many drivers worry about being 'just a number'. Treating your new drivers like people, walking them through onboarding, checking in often, and being genuinely concerned about their questions and feedback can make a world of difference.

***Don't wait for drivers to slide into the complacency stage of employment. Getting drivers used to communicating, engaging, and sharing their feedback with your organization early can help create a strong company culture.***



## PILLAR #3 | DRIVER FEEDBACK EXISTS WHETHER CARRIERS KNOW IT OR NOT

In any industry, feedback can be received as a gift or a curse, and the difference comes down to whether your company can embrace change. Innovative organizations approach driver feedback as an opportunity and are ready to take action on what drivers share. This is all about creating a process to funnel driver feedback into your organization and its strategic initiatives rather than losing the data to the void. Drivers are ready to share, and a dedicated strategy for understanding and implementing changes is necessary.

Ignoring feedback doesn't mean it does not exist; it just means it's harder to do something with the insights available from this feedback. Driver feedback can be used to make strategic changes within an organization. If, for example, you see high turnover is related to drivers desiring to be home more with their families, how can you adjust your business model/driver job description to address these concerns?



This feedback (and how your team is using it) can directly impact recruiting and referral strategies and driver retention. Positive reviews make 94% of people more likely to join or use a business, and 79% of people trust online reviews as much as friends and family. So, you can ignore driver feedback and miss out on this untapped opportunity or invest in this feedback and drive change across your organization – and your bottom line.

Just remember that implementing positive change takes time. If a driver has a specific issue, address it and commit to following up with the next steps. Unfortunately, there will always be issues that you can't control, but your team should strive to show empathy and provide a clear explanation. Never hide or lie to your drivers because you don't have an answer. After all, effective and efficient communication could be the key to patching the holes in the recruiting and retention leaky bucket as mentioned before.



## About DriverReach

DriverReach's modern recruiting and compliance management system provides a better applicant experience and dramatically improves speed-to-hire. A mobile-friendly DOT application feeds directly into a full-service ATS with email and text functionality, streamlining the process of qualifying drivers so companies can Hire. Better. Faster. Learn more at [driverreach.com](https://driverreach.com).



## About RocketCDL

RocketCDL was founded to address current difficulties faced by motor carriers by providing a robust rewards program to help reduce turnover and provide incentive-based hiring. We have created a software that improves workflow surrounding driver rewards, referrals, and incentives in one easy tool. Learn more at [rocketcdl.com](https://rocketcdl.com).



## About WorkHound

WorkHound addresses high turnover in industries with distributed workforces where workers get little time with managers. This leads to sparse communication, distrust, and diminished productivity. WorkHound is a platform that enables workers to share real-time, anonymous feedback with their companies, equipping decision-makers with clear and effective data to quickly take action for company-wide retention and culture optimization. Learn more at [workhound.com](https://workhound.com).

