

Diane Irvin • Improving Human Ecosystems

How do trucking companies retain talent when most of their employees are on the road? Addressing this and other human resources concerns is all in a day's work for consultants and interviewers at Strategic Programs, Inc., co-founded by Senior Vice President Diane Irvin; and her partner, CEO Rim Yurkus. The company attracts the kind of employees who want to make a difference in the lives of their clients.

Formerly a social worker, Diane started the company with the vision of "Improving the human ecosystems of organizations, in which the development of individuals expands to improve their families, their communities and the world."

"We absolutely have the best clients anywhere," Diane beamed. "They care about the quality of work life of their employees, and want to retain and develop talent. Most often, for trucking companies, we conduct confidential exit interviews with drivers to learn the real reasons they leave, and report our findings to employers, along with action plans to improve retention. "We also conduct employee engagement surveys, to show why current drivers and other employees stay on the job. Comparing the profile of drivers who left, to the profile of those who remain, shows strengths that management can further develop, and weaknesses that, if adjusted, can help reduce turnover, and increase the job satisfaction and safety of current drivers," Diane explained.

Each company has its unique culture. While one may have driver issues around time at home, another may need to improve communication between fleet managers and drivers. If the research shows that driver managers contribute significantly to driver turnover, profiling the managers, and training them to be more effective as they work with drivers can improve relationships; and retention.

A one-size-fits-all approach is not consistent with the Strategic Programs focus on client intimacy. Their data analysts and consultants partner with clients to develop client-specific, data-driven solutions to address issues that fit the unique culture of each company.

"In this economy, most companies are working lean," Diane explained. "When they do not have the internal staff for quality on boarding of new drivers, we can provide Retention Agents through our Strategic Contact service. These Agents know at what point in the new driver's employment experience disengagement or distrust may begin. That's when they call new drivers to ask how the job is going, and advise managers to address any misunderstandings about bonuses, pay, benefits, etc. that could develop into disengagement, if ignored."

Retention Agents reduce driver turnover, and improve morale and engagement by letting drivers know that their employer values



*Diane Irvin, Senior Vice President
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them enough to stay in contact, listen, and provide helpful support during stressful times.

From a data base of more than 55,000 driver interviews, Strategic Programs has identified driver compensation, unmet expectations, lack of advancement opportunities, and dissatisfaction with dispatching and scheduling as some of the critical issues in the trucking industry. As economic concerns increasingly affect organizational culture, it is vital for trucking companies to examine their culture and relationship with employees.

United States and Canadian trucking companies use Denver-based Strategic Programs to identify potential problems at all levels of their organizations. They can improve their understanding of the workforce, from top leadership to hands-on-the-wheel.

Employees matter

Trucking companies that are knowledgeable about employees' expectations, and strive to make the employees feel appreciated are the most likely to retain high potentials.

"Our services help businesses to operate cost-effectively by retaining their greatest investment- their people. We measure employee engagement, whereby the intellectual capital of the company is positively charged by contributing above and beyond what is required by the company to what is inspired by engaged employees," said Diane.

"Working toward shared goals through others helps companies to achieve far beyond what any of us could accomplish alone," she continued.