

Driver Shortage and Women

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Recently, I heard a lady driver call into a trucking radio talk show. She was wondering why trucking companies didn't target the large available female work force to recruit drivers to fill the so called driver shortage. She felt that trucking companies should be advertising in women's magazines outside of the industry such as Pink, a women's magazine that targets career women and promotes equality in the workforce.

Though not a radical feminist, I believe in equal pay for equal work and that women should be hired to do any job that they are qualified for and able to do, key words: qualified for and able to do. In the trucking industry, there is no real glass ceiling. If a man and a woman graduate trucking school at the same time, hire on with the same company, show the same work ethic and have basically the same safety and performance records; they will advance in their pay scale at the same rate.

Many trucking companies depict women drivers in their advertisements in trade magazines and almost all ads in newspapers reflect that the companies are equal opportunity employers. Many trucking school ads in television and in print also depict women students. So why don't trucking companies specifically target women in non trade forums? It is fairly simple, but you have to look realistically at the industry and women's traditional roles.

Most trucking jobs, specially at entry level, require 2-4+ weeks out before getting home time, and then only a couple of days at home are allowed.

Many younger women have minor children that require their mothers to be at home daily, older women want to be around the grand kids. Married women find that their husbands don't want them gone for extended periods of time. Also, single women may marry, start a family and leave the industry in a short period of time..

Many companies require lifting requirements that are beyond many women's abilities. One woman that I know is currently having a problem finding a job because the companies that she has checked in to, require that she be able to lift 75#'s, she is unable to do that at this time.

Driving truck is physically / mentally demanding.

Most women who enter the industry later in life have had careers that are traditional: secretarial, office, teaching, nursing, raising the family, sales, etc. Though trucking is vastly improved over the old Armstrong steering and spring ride suspensions, many older women have some medical problems and do not have the stamina to drive under the current HOS laws. Furthermore, many women have never faced the driving challenges that trucking faces, ie: traffic, big cities, mountain terrain and weather.

Trucking companies want the most 'bang' for their buck.

Advertising is expensive and with only a supposed 7% of the driver population being female, and the percentage not having raised significantly over the last 10 years or so, many companies may find themselves unwilling to spend so much money for little return.

The above reasons apply to males in some cases also. Men raise kids and want to be home with them or grandkids, don't want to be away from spouses/significant others, don't have the physical requirements or stamina to do the job, and also come from less physically demanding 'first' careers. But, men are also more attracted to the so-called freedom of the road and are more interested in 'heavy metal' equipment...the 'guy things.' Traditionally, men have always left the family behind and went to war, work or play more than women.

Therefore, males are more targeted as potential drivers than women are. Of course, we women who already drive truck, have overcome the above problems, adjusted ourselves to them, or in most cases, the competition between family and job did not exist to begin with.

Few trucking companies in general, advertise outside of industry trade publications or newspapers, with the rare exception of the occasional television ad. They restrict their ads to these types of media because of the specialty of our trade and prefer, in my opinion, to attract people who are already interested in driving truck for a living, leaving the fishing for prospective drivers, who have not thought about trucking as a career, to the truck driving schools.

We lady drivers know that we are valuable assets to the industry as drivers. We can promote driving as a career perhaps better than any advertisement in any magazine by conducting ourselves professionally and getting recognition for the good job that we do. In gaining recognition, we promote ourselves to companies thereby encouraging them to hire more women as drivers. This in itself will also solve the perceived problem of advertisement focused on hiring women by the trucking schools who want to train what the industry wants thereby targeting more women as potential drivers.

The other thing that we can do is to advertise trucking as a potential career choice for other women is by talking to the women we meet both on the job and at home. By seeing a real, live, lady professional driver, women will be more apt to consider trucking as a career than in seeing any ad in any type of media. "A picture is worth a thousand words."