



Technology in Trucking

MARK MURRELL

In the tech industry, there are more and more people whispering that the latest tech bubble is about to burst. If that's the case, then it's probably time to start looking seriously at some of these new technologies and see what they have to offer. I find that during the "gold rush" part of any tech bubble, the technology has lots of promise but far too many wants to be useful. About the time the bubble bursts, the technology starts to mature and becomes useful. We appear to be at that stage right now with social networking, so this month we're going to have a look at that.

When people talk about social networking, the two names that come up most commonly are Facebook and MySpace. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of similar services, but these two are the best known and most popular. They both do basically the same thing – allow people to connect with each other in social ways over the Internet.

MySpace found an early audience among musicians because it offered an effective, cheap (free) way to create a fan site, and connect with similar acts to leverage their fans. MySpace allows users to

upload pictures, music, and videos, share them among "friends," stay in touch with a dispersed group, and meet new like-minded people. While it was initially known for the garish home pages created by its (largely preteen) users, and the army of pedophiles trolling those users, it's been cleaned up significantly and is now recognized as a powerful collaboration and marketing platform across a variety of industries.

Facebook is like a slightly more grownup version of MySpace. Facebook is less about creating a personalized multimedia presence and more about connecting (and staying connected) with individuals, groups, events, and causes that serve particular interests. Facebook gained popularity initially among the high school and college set as a vehicle for sharing class work, coordinating events, and complaining about unpopular profs. While that audience is still

represented, more and more people are recognizing its value for other types of collaboration. For instance, many businesses have Facebook groups where their employees can share tips and best practices to improve their efficiency. Even those organizations that don't use it strictly for work purposes recognize that it's a great tool for building the culture of the business. With no membership fees, it's a pretty good value.

Coming back to the trucking industry, the value of these tools is pretty obvious. We've got a huge workforce that's perpetually on the move and never at 'the office.' Staying connected to friends and family

is hard enough, let alone coworkers and other industry colleagues. Social networking tools offer a great way to keep those connections alive and build new ones as well.

In support of that, there are more and more trucking-specific social networks. CDLOfit and MyTruckingSpace are the two that I see the most.

CDLOfit is a service run by Kevin Rutherford of Trucking Business & Beyond fame. It's designed specifically for drivers and lets them connect with other drivers to share tips, war stories, and anything else that's on their mind. There's also a weekly conference call, classified ads, and a variety

of other services that help drivers feel like part of a community while on the road.

MyTruckingSpace is an extension of Layover.com and tends to focus more on multimedia. In addition to standard fare like discussion forums, interest-based groups, events, and classifieds, they've also got photo galleries supplied by members and a music video library. If CDLOfit is serving the 'work' part of the driver's life, MyTruckingSpace is focused on the 'personal' side – lots of kid and dog pictures, vacation shots, and drivers showcasing their hobbies and interests.

These are only two, but there are lots more out there. Facebook and MySpace gets lots of media attention because they're general purpose sites with tens of millions of users, but there are dozens of smaller sites that are just as useful. In fact, those smaller sites, focused on specific segments and interests, may be the ones that are best fulfilling the promise of online social networking. They're providing a friendly, welcoming environment where drivers can relax, learn something, and be part of a community. Whether it's real or virtual, that's a pretty powerful offering.

Have you tried any of these social networking sites? If so, what do you think? Let me know!

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What's all this fuss about social networking?

"They're providing a friendly, welcoming environment where drivers can relax, learn something, and be part of a community"

Practical Vehicle Inspection online course now available

October 29, 2008 – MARKHAM, ON – CarriersEdge®, the leading provider of online driver improvement programs, and Techni-Com Inc., a leading producer of commercial vehicle safety and compliance materials, today announced the release of their jointly-developed Practical Vehicle Inspection online training course.

Designed as a companion to the popular and highly-regarded Practical Vehicle Inspection handbook, the online course uses real-world scenarios and exercises to illustrate the latest National Safety Code regulations. Separate programs for tractor-trailers and straight trucks, along with mini-course refreshers, allow fleets to tailor the content to best suit their individual needs.

"CarriersEdge has done a great job with this course", said Rolf VanderZwaag, President of Techni-Com. "They've

created a program that's clear, easy to use, and really brings the content to life."

"Techni-Com has some of the finest content in the industry, and it lends itself very nicely to online delivery", added Mark Murrell, President of CarriersEdge. "This course is a great addition to our library."

CarriersEdge subscription customers will automatically receive Practical Vehicle Inspection as part of their subscription service. The course may also be purchased individually through CarriersEdge or Techni-Com.

More information about CarriersEdge is available at www.driverquality.com

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About CarriersEdge

CarriersEdge is the leading provider of online

driver quality improvement solutions. Comprised of online testing, training and reporting tools, along with expert business analysis and consulting services, CarriersEdge allows trucking companies to improve business performance by improving driver quality, and do so without the compromises required by traditional alternatives.

About Techni-Com

Techni-Com works primarily with the Ontario Trucking Association and the Canadian Trucking Alliance as a development partner, producing and publishing compliance, awareness and training products in the areas of airbrakes, wheel safety, cargo securement, dangerous goods, hours of service and vehicle inspection. Techni-Com also works with the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, based in Washington D.C., also a distributor of Techni-Com publications, and with other similar organizations.

Peter Charboneau recognized by Nepean Chamber of Commerce as Businessman of the Year

On Thursday, October 16 Peter Charboneau, President and founder of *Over the Road Magazine, Canadian Motor Media* and the annual Canadian Recruiting and Retention Conference was recognized by the Nepean Chamber of Commerce as Businessman of the Year.

His letter of nomination contained the following statement:

"The last year has been particularly challenging in

the trucking industry with many businesses struggling to survive and through it Peter has guided his business to grow, maintained a positive environment for the team and continued to be a positive influence on the industry. One of the constants



with Peter is taking care of his team, giving them room to develop and sharing the success. This has built a strong loyalty and he is well respected by his team."

His generosity and ded-

ication to charity was referenced, particularly including his active role in the Ottawa Kiwanis Club and the fact that he is the Chair of the Trucker Buddy International Program. With Peter's guidance the Canadian Recruiting and Retention Conference has raised almost \$10,000 for the Trucker Buddy Program, a program that matches professional drivers with elementary school classes to educate about the driving industry.

None are more proud and pleased for Peter than his family - wife Mary, son Donald and daughters Cathryn and Trisha - and friends, colleagues and the *Over the Road* staff.