

# Street Smarts

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MANAGING PEOPLE, TECHNOLOGY, BUSINESS, AND SAFETY



## Anytime is Training Time

**training** *Can't afford salary increases? How about paying your people with schooling? By Peter Carter*

**I**f you're looking for a way to keep your staff around longer but can't afford pay hikes, you might want to think about giving your people a chance for self-improvement. Training and development can go a long way in making people love their jobs. And stay around longer.

Gail Rieschi—along with an army of other experts—believes training is a proven motivator and a time-tested inexpensive way of retaining staff. In fact, training (and development) is among the top three employee motivators.

Rieschi is president and CEO of VPI Employment Strategies, a Toronto-based

human-resources and job-placement organization that specializes in “maximizing employment, productivity, and workplace health while minimizing costs.” Her government-sponsored organization has more than one truck fleet in its roster of clients, and she says one of the primary reasons fleets have such high turnover is that employees don't see opportunities for advancement.

“Most companies pay a competitive salary. So for workers, it's really a matter of ‘what else is there for me?’”

Too many drivers, she says, see trucking as a dead-end career, when in fact almost

everybody wants to move ahead with their jobs. Overlooked, she says, is the answer to the question “where can I go from here?”

“I think building a career in the trucking industry could be very attractive to a lot of people,” she says. “If only they were aware of the opportunities.”

“Very often people don't see it [trucking] as a career area that has a progression. It's important you start promoting that it's not just about driving, but that you can start as a driver and go into management roles and self employment and that the job has progression.”

Rieschi says training engenders loyalty, particularly among new Canadians. “You demonstrate to them that they're important to the future of your company and that they're not just another driver, and they'll stay around longer.” She says that sometimes, training for new Canadians can involve something as simple as a bit of time off for English-as-a-Second-Language class.

Right. Time off. Does she forget that we're talking about trucking here? If everybody could offer more time off, there'd be no driver shortage. After all, isn't the inflexibility of the work-week the biggest reason behind the driver shortage? Especially when you know that among the other non-monetary motivators, employees value work-life balance? Who's in a position to deliver on that promise?

Rieschi acknowledges the dilemma but says if you can't offer more flexibility, you can compensate with more employee recognition—safety bonuses, employee-of-the-month programs, etc.—and more training. As for the costs, she says, the high price of hiring and working with new people far outweighs the costs of training programs.

Which is where Mark Murell comes in.

Murell is the president of CarriersEdge, a Markham, Ont.,-based organization specializing in online training for drivers. This month Murell and the administration at Humber College—known for its driver-training programs—will offer the first college certificate designed specifically for drivers.

The Certificate in Small Business Management for the Trucking Industry is the first of its kind in Canada. Starting this month, this online program will offer professional drivers a chance to improve their skills and knowledge of driving as a profession as well as their business and leadership skills while they're actually driving.

The certificate is comprised of eight courses, which can be taken in any order. And even though Humber is a Toronto-based school, students can enroll from anywhere in the country.

The courses include: How To Start A Small Business; Human Relations; Small Business Bookkeeping; Border Crossing; Defensive Driving; Pretrip, HOS & Logbooks; Cargo Securement; and Transportation of Dangerous Goods.

The first three courses come from the Ontario Management Development Program, which Humber offers as part of its continuing education services. The remaining five courses are part of the CarriersEdge library.

"Many drivers would love to have a

college education, but have never had the chance," notes Murrell. "This program allows them to get that education without sacrificing driving time, even if they never finished high school. Humber has shown tremendous leadership in crafting this program and we're excited to be working with them."

The full course costs about \$1,500, Murrell says, adding that it's a rather inexpensive way to get a college diploma, something that has been out of reach of many drivers.

"It's not that drivers are not intelligent," he says, "but often, that piece of paper has been inaccessible. This changes that situation."

He also recognizes that getting the diploma will empower drivers so they'll feel better about their careers. "We're trying to help them see that training and education aren't punishments. It doesn't have to be a threat."

Most people in the industry realize that drivers are independent types. As Rieschi puts it so diplomatically, "they tend to be

the unstructured autonomous" sort.

Murrell says his course is designed for that personality type.

"We've been dealing with driver education for years and we realize that sometimes the goal lines are too far away and there's too much paperwork involved," he says. That's why the new course is designed to be extremely driver friendly.

"It's something they can work at on their own pace and put in as much or as little time as they want." ▲

## FOR MORE INFO

- Gail Rieshi ([www.vpi-inc.com](http://www.vpi-inc.com))
- Mark Murrell ([www.carriersedge.com](http://www.carriersedge.com))
- The Canadian Society for Training and Development ([www.cstd.ca](http://www.cstd.ca))
- The Canadian Council on Learning ([www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl))
- The Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council ([www.cthrc.com](http://www.cthrc.com))



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