

# Driver Retention Guide

What top-performing fleets do to keep great drivers longer  
Critical to service reliability, cost control, and keeping freight moving.

**90%+**

annual turnover rate at large  
truckload carriers

*\*NASEM / ATA data — the industry's most cited  
retention challenge*

**47%**

of drivers do not feel valued or  
appreciated at their current company

*\*PDA Fall 2024 Survey — nearly half of your drivers  
right now*

**\$13K**

estimated cost per driver turnover in  
2025–2026

*\*Platform Science Driver Experience Report, Feb 2026*

## WHAT DRIVERS CARE ABOUT

The most effective retention strategies start with understanding what drivers actually value. These themes come straight from drivers, not HR consultants. These four themes come directly from the Platform Science Driver Experience Report (Feb 2026, 1,100+ drivers) and PDA's 2024 research.

### PAY TRANSPARENCY

- "Retention is about more than just pay rates; it's about ensuring drivers can actually earn the money they were promised. When miles drop, pay drops, and that leads to frustration."

### SCHEDULE RELIABILITY

- "Fleets that keep clear expectations around pay, schedules, and miles see meaningfully better retention."

### EQUIPMENT & TECHNOLOGY THAT WORKS

- "Pay matters, but so does trust, communication, and technology that actually works. 53% of drivers say technology makes their job harder, not easier."

### THE SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP

- "Honest, consistent communication between drivers, dispatch, and leadership is tied closely to job satisfaction. Drivers want to feel informed rather than surprised."

## THE 6 PRACTICES OF HIGH-RETENTION FLEETS

Based on industry research and what we consistently see across fleets, these six practices show up again and again in high-retention operations.

At TransForce, our approach is built around these same principles, helping carriers not only find drivers, but support long-term success on the road.

*\*While no single study defines these as a formal framework, each practice is grounded in consistent findings across recent driver experience and retention research.*

### 1 Make Pay Transparent and Predictable

Pay clarity is the #1 retention driver across every recent study.

- Document the full pay structure and walk every new hire through it on Day 1
- Address pay questions within 24 hours
- Communicate proactively when pay will be affected by freight or routing changes
- Benchmark wages annually. Pay transparency laws now apply in 14 states

### 2 Protect Schedule Consistency

Drivers chose specific types of work for predictability.

- Set realistic start windows and hold to them
- Communicate route or load changes as early as possible
- When schedules must shift, ask before assigning; consulted drivers accept changes better
- If schedule variance is frequent, treat it as a structural problem, not a one-off

### 3 Keep Equipment Road-Ready

Equipment condition is a daily signal about how much a company respects a driver's time and safety.

- Preventive maintenance culture. Don't wait for a driver complaint to act on a known issue
- Respond to driver-reported equipment problems the same day, even just to confirm it's logged
- Keep in-cab technology simple and integrated
- Involve drivers when evaluating new technology before deployment

### 4 Build the Supervisor Relationship Intentionally

The supervisor relationship is the single highest-leverage retention tool available and the most common reason drivers quietly start looking elsewhere when it breaks down.

- Get to know every driver well
- Train dispatchers on communication tone, not just logistics
- Give drivers a direct line to raise concerns without it feeling like a formal complaint
- When a driver raises an issue, follow up

### 5 Invest in the First 90 Days

New driver churn is highest in the first 90–120 days. Early check-ins catch the signals before they become departures.

- **Day 1:** equipment ready, someone assigned to walk them through the day
- **Day 7:** direct check-in from their manager on pay, schedule, and dispatch
- **Day 30:** ask what's been different from what they expected
- **Day 90:** celebrate the milestone

### 6 Create a Path Forward

Drivers who can see a future with the company stay significantly longer.

- Define at least one advancement opportunity
- Recognize tenure publicly and specifically and announce milestones to the team
- Promote from within for operational roles wherever possible
- Ask high-tenure drivers what would make them stay another three years

## HOW DOES YOUR OPERATION SCORE?

A quick check across the six retention practices. Rate your operation honestly: **Strong, Developing, or Gap.**

Practice	Strong	Developing	Gap
Pay is fully documented and communicated. Drivers can explain their own check	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule reliability is tracked. Start times and routes are consistent and changes are communicated early	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equipment is maintained proactively and driver-reported issues are resolved same-day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supervisors and dispatchers are trained on driver communication, not just operations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Structured 90-day onboarding with direct manager check-ins at Day 7, 30, 60, and 90	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
At least one defined advancement path exists and is communicated to drivers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Any 'Gap' is a conversation worth having. Your Market Manager can help identify where a workforce partner fits into the solution, whether that's taking pressure off your recruiting pipeline so your team can focus on retention, or thinking through onboarding structure together.