



How to Choose the Right Company to Drive for

"When you make a choice, you change the future." -Deepak Chopra

To achieve a high level of success in trucking, a TopTrucker, you need to be with the right company to dramatically increase your odds of success. Currently there are an estimated 1.2 million trucking companies in the United States, 90% of which operate 6 or fewer trucks. Therefore, your task of finding the right one can be a bit challenging. First, you'll need to ask and answer tough questions of yourself. Second, do your own research. And third, hunt for the company that will be best suited for your desired career goals. And finally, make an educated decision, and go for it! Let's get started...

There are seven "key factors" you'll need to consider to increase your chances of finding a company you can truly believe in! They are:

1. Career Opportunities
2. Ladder or Retirement Company
3. Target Companies
4. Company Management
5. Company Culture
6. Compensation Package
7. Orientation and Training



Now let's look deeper into each of these key factors to help determine what will be the most profitable career path. Grab a notebook and pen, and start getting your thoughts together on paper as we review each one.

1: Career Opportunities

First, you'll need to decide which career opportunity, or segment, gives you the strongest overall feeling when you think about it. This would include, but not limited to; city, line-haul, flatbed, tanker, van, reefer, etc. In other words, which area of the trucking industry do you want to focus your efforts? Think of it like this; work you like, or even love, will help you keep your attitude up during the inevitable storms of life. Also, don't worry if you decide to change your mind later and focus on another area. Your goal, especially in the beginning, should be to get as much high quality experience under your belt as possible. Remember, it's a career your building, it takes time to fit all the pieces together, not everyone gets it perfect from the start. Ultimately, your success as a professional truck driver will be determined by "what you do" with each of your chosen opportunities.

Example: I started with the most common and easiest segment to get into to: 53' truck load van. I am now running line-haul and loving it! Line-haul is typically pulling doubles and sometimes van, and moves from terminal to terminal. Truck load turned out to be a real blessing of a "ladder" position because of the amazing experiences it gave me leading up to the "retirement" opportunity I now enjoy.



2: Ladder or Retirement Company

A Ladder company is one you'll select when you need to get the experience necessary to qualify for what I referred to earlier as a retirement company. You can sometimes have a great career with a ladder company, but you'll typically not make \$100K or more per year. A Retirement company should be your prime career target, depending on your goals of course. A Retirement company, as the name implies, is one that offers everything you're looking for (within reason) up to and including retirement.

Example: my previous company offered: professional appearance, great equipment, good service centers, various career opportunities, competitions, and decent money in the \$55K range... to name a few. Not bad for a "Ladder" that can also be a "Retirement" company. But, I'm a climber and not a tomato, so it wasn't enough. My new company offers even more of what I'm looking for. This translates into many more career experiences and much higher pay!

3: Target Companies

Next, you'll have to decide who your target companies will be. I would suggest having at least three (3) on your "short list" before making your final decision. Note: this is where research and patience will pay off huge. Also, don't just blindly believe everything someone tells you, unless it's in writing on official company correspondence! Remember what President Reagan said: "Trust but verify!"



Carefully research the top companies in your area that match your desired career segment. Use your notebook to construct a list of questions (see samples below) that are critical to your particular career goals. Then work like mad, but take your time, to get answers to those questions from the companies themselves, current drivers, and former drivers as well. Use any and all resources available to you. Also, check with the Better Business Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce, and any online forums or websites for outstanding lawsuits or complaints, as well as positive comments. The Internet just might become your best friend with this portion of your research. Ultimately, you'll want to feel secure that the company will be around for the long haul, providing you and your family with the opportunity to achieve the necessary financial security you all deserve.

4: Company Management

You'll have to examine the management team to get a feel if it has a solid mix of professional managers capable of taking the company into the future.

Look for the following clues:

1. Does the company live its stated core values?
2. Does the company feel driver-centered, or self-centered?
3. Does the company listen to the ideas of its employees?
4. Does the company spend its capital wisely?
5. Does the company keep the equipment in top operating condition?



6. Does the company communicate information in a timely manner?
7. Does the company enforce DOT/CSA rules and regulations?
8. Does the company management feel like good people to work with?
9. Does the company have make time and resources available for fun?

5: Company Culture

Reality check: You can't work and be successful where you don't feel a certain level of comfort. You can't reach for the moon where you don't have a place to call home. And finally, you can't grow into a TopTrucker where you don't feel like you're part of something larger.

Bottom line: the culture of the company should carry sufficient weight on your decision to work and build your career there.

6: Compensation Package

Is the compensation package easy to understand, or is it some convoluted mathematical equation? Ask for average annual incomes at different time periods (1, year, 2 years and 3 years) to get a picture of what people are making. Also, make sure to ask how long it takes to reach top pay. Finally, you'll need to find out when other items are paid, such as: tolls, scales, drops/hooks, detention, layover pay, cell phone etc.

7: Orientation and Training

Find out what type of and how much training is offered by the prospective company. Your training goal is to make sure you're not just



thrown into your job without proper preparation. There's nothing worse about this phase than being ill prepared... nobody needs that kind of stress. Remember this: first rate companies provide first rate training; anything less is a serious red flag.

Conclusion:

Now that you have diligently done your research and interviews needed to help make an informed decision. You are now ready to use what the Marine Corp calls the 70% solution. This decision making methodology is simply this: once you have completed 70% of the research, and have done 70% of the thinking; it's time to make the decision! Or, like Nike says: "Just do it!"

Best of luck to you!

Sample Interview Questions:

Note: this is a sample of questions that can be asked... enough to get you started, but certainly not exhaustive. There are additional spaces at the end of the initial list where you can brainstorm questions that are specifically important to your career goals.

Final thought: You're not the only one being interviewed here. In fact, their need to see if you fit is equally as important as their fit is to your life.

1. Do you have a website that explains more about your company?

Answer: _____

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2. Do you have printed company literature you can send to me?

Answer: _____

3. How long have you been in business?

Answer: _____

4. Do you have a list of testimonials from customers?

Answer: _____

5. Do you have a list of testimonials from drivers?

Answer: _____

6. What is your CSA score?

Answer: _____

7. What are the growth opportunities within the company?

Answer: _____

8. Walk me through a typical work week scenario?

Answer: _____

9. Can I stay out longer to make additional income?

Answer: _____

10. What is the company policy towards home time?

Answer: _____

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11. When is the next orientation class?

Answer: _____

12. How long does orientation last?

Answer: _____

13. How long will I be out with the company trainer? (If applicable)

Answer: _____

14. What is the pay rate during training?

Answer: _____

15. What is the starting rate of pay once training is over? Is it negotiable?

Answer: _____

16. How long does it take to hit top pay?

Answer: _____

17. When and how does vacation accrue?

Answer: _____

18. How much and when does holiday pay accrue?

Answer: _____

19. What other items does the company compensate for?

Answer: _____

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20. When do these additional items pay out?

Answer: _____

21. Will you require me to work on a religious holiday?

Answer: _____

Additional space for your own interview questions:

21. Question:

Answer: _____

22. Question:

Answer: _____

23. Question:

Answer: _____

24. Question:

Answer: _____

25. Question:

Answer: _____

26. Question:

Answer: _____

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27. Question:

Answer: _____

28. Question:

Answer: _____

29. Question:

Answer: _____

30. Question:

Answer: _____

