

# Redefining *the* Road

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The official magazine of the Women In Trucking Association

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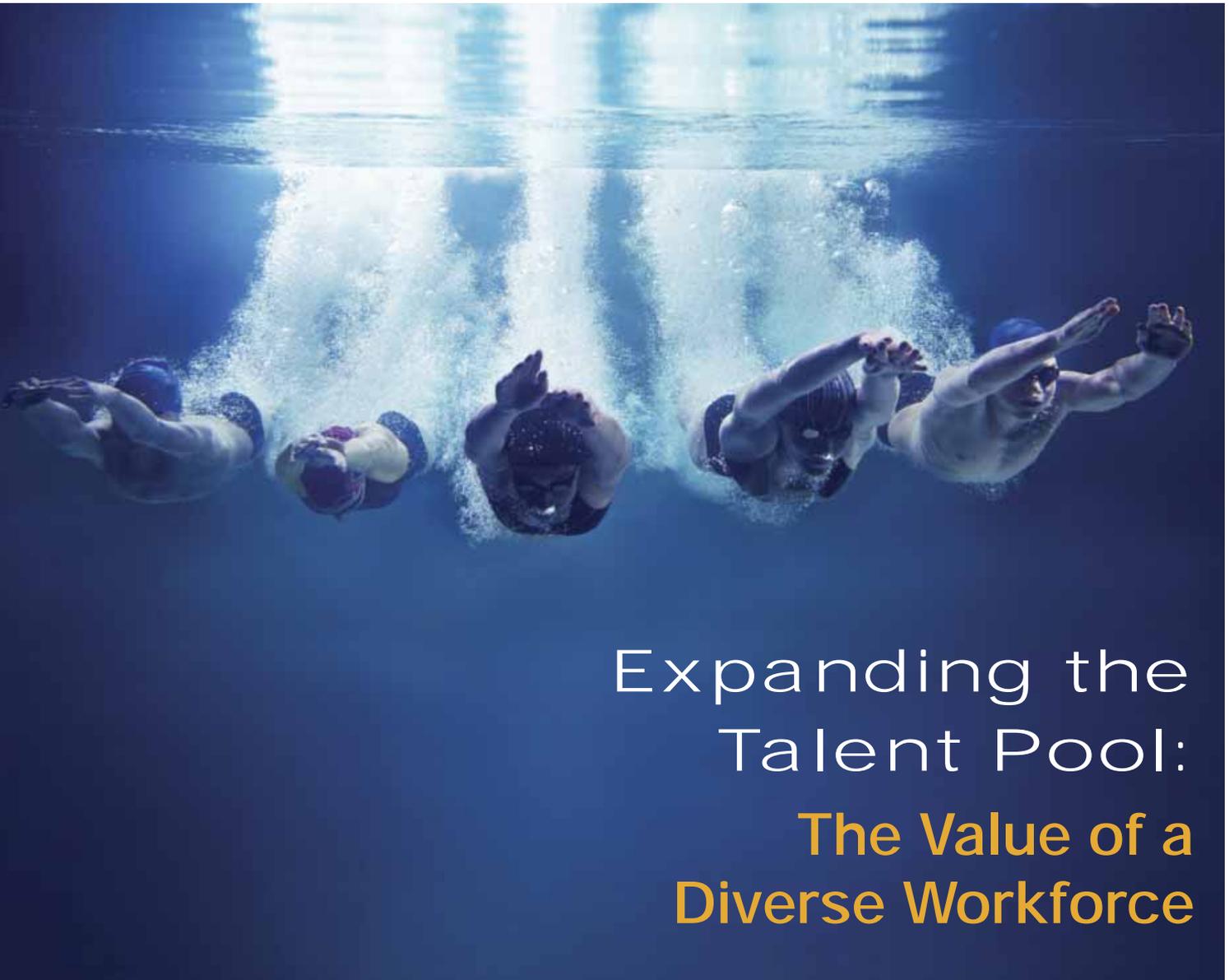


**WIT & Girl Scouts**



Expanding the  
Talent Pool:

**The Value of a  
Diverse Workforce**



# Expanding the Talent Pool: The Value of a Diverse Workforce

**The industry can no longer afford to maintain the status quo when it comes to recruiting. Companies with jobs to fill need to broaden their field of view.**

There's no denying the critical need to expand the available workforce in the transportation and logistics industry. The driver shortage, an aging workforce, increasing regulation and industry growth have contributed to the perfect storm.

The industry can no longer afford to maintain the status quo when it comes to recruiting. Companies with jobs to fill need to broaden their field of view.

"If you keep going to the same well for talent, you're going to get the same result," warns Keera Brooks, President and CEO of Sawgrass Logistics and the driving force behind Women In Trucking's (WIT) new *Best Practices Guide to Increasing Women Drivers in the Industry*. "If you're continually picking off other companies' drivers, for example, it becomes a wage issue. And your customers can't afford that."

Instead, Brooks encourages companies to expand their potential talent pool to include women, veterans, older workers, etc. Hiring workers from a variety of backgrounds and work experiences can have a dramatic impact on an organization.

### Why widen the net?

“Workforce diversity can provide great value,” Brooks explains. “A solid foundation for your own company, a better relationship with customers, increased profitability.”

“A diverse team delivers better business outcomes,” Patrick Pendergast, Group Director of Talent Acquisition for Ryder System, Inc., agrees. “When every person on a team comes from a different setting, they each have different insights. That pushes the team to deliver their best. There’s a tangible business outcome—real ROI.”

### Do the legwork

Educate internal audiences on the importance of diversity. “You’ve got to work with your hiring managers. Talk about the make-up of the team,” Pendergast says. “What skill sets are they looking for? What kind of background experience are they lacking? Always be looking for someone with a different experience or a new angle they can bring to the team.”

Pendergast also suggests establishing partnerships with external organizations like Women In Trucking to stay abreast of best practices.

### Get the word out

One of the biggest hurdles in hiring women is a lack of awareness. Jobs in transportation are often not even on their radar.

“We need to make women aware of great careers we have—for drivers, of course, but also for engineers, freight planners, etc.,” Pendergast explains.

“Today, only about 6 percent of professional drivers are women, and 14 percent hold management positions,” Brooks points out. “We’ve only just scratched the surface.”

### Know your market

Companies interested in attracting more women can’t expect to use one-size-fits-all recruiting practices.

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# We Want You



If you’re ready to recruit more women to your organization, the U.S. Armed Forces can be a valuable resource. Approximately 15,000 military personnel transition out of the military every month—approximately 15 percent of whom are women, says Brad Bentley, President, FASTPORT, Inc.

Veterans prove to be an excellent talent pool because they are self-disciplined, mission-focused, safety-oriented and excel at challenges.

“Veterans are hard-wired to succeed in our industry because they’ve already worked for the largest logistics operation in the world: the U.S. military,” Bentley reasons.

While the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines are natural targets, Bentley encourages companies to consider the National Guard and Reserve and military spouses as well since they also represent a diverse and highly capable talent pool.

Don’t rush into a military recruiting program, however. Bentley stresses the need for the right corporate culture: “Veterans always know their rank, responsibilities, and what they need to do to advance,” he explains. “If you don’t have that structural organization, you’re setting yourself up for failure. They may wind up leaving the company—and the industry.”

When creating a military recruiting program, Bentley recommends keeping in mind a few important elements:

- Make sure to have a former or current member of the military in your recruiting department—ideally, a member from each branch of the service.
- Mentorship is a must. Veterans will want to connect, ask questions, learn about the company culture, etc.
- Establish a veteran’s affinity group or talent network. This is especially important for female veterans, so it helps with both recruiting and retention.
- Remember to educate veterans about other opportunities beyond professional driving. They may not be aware that their skill sets translate into other occupations. Show them where they can add value.
- Veterans will want the opportunity to advance. Show them possible career paths early on. Recognition programs can help to create a positive environment.
- Consider implementing a Department of Labor (DOL)-approved Registered Apprenticeship program. Veterans may need to learn industry-specific knowledge to supplement the training they had in the military, and paid training is an incredible recruiting and retention resource for this sought-after cohort.

### For more information, check out these resources:

#### **FASTPORT, Inc.** [fastport.com](http://fastport.com)

Using its job-matching technology, FASTPORT connects job seekers to employers actively hiring from both the civilian marketplace and military community. FASTPORT also helps employers create and maintain Registered Apprenticeship programs.

#### **Hiring Our Heroes** [uschamberfoundation.org/hiring-our-heroes](http://uschamberfoundation.org/hiring-our-heroes)

This nationwide initiative by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation hosts more than 100 events each year to help veterans, transitioning service members and military spouses find meaningful employment opportunities.

#### **National Transportation Center** [nationaltransportationcenter.org](http://nationaltransportationcenter.org)

The National Transportation Center offers training programs to individuals interested in pursuing a career in the transportation industry and those currently employed in the industry who would benefit from continuing education, with emphasis on supporting veterans.

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“If the transportation industry is ready to engage more women, it’s time to think about how to engage differently,” Brooks says. “So many people just don’t know how to hire women.”

To get started, recruiters need to understand their target market. Men and women are obviously wired differently. So what really resonates with women?

“When we recruit men, we usually find that a challenge is effective: ‘Here’s what can be done. Can you do it?’ It’s a cowboy mentality,” explains Jason Williams, Co-founder and President of Expediter Services, LLC. “For women—and this is also generally true of minorities and immigrants—an approach like ‘Together, we can’ is more effective. The support system opens the door.”

Historically, the transportation industry has involved risk taking. Women tend to be more averse to risk than men, so it can be helpful to show them ways to engage with minimal risk. For example, Williams says, women often

prefer to test the carrier and equipment before jumping right into a purchase.

### Keep everyone on board

Once they’re on board, women need to feel supported in order to stay connected and engaged.

“Companies sometimes focus so much on recruiting and then lose employees on the back end,” Keera Brooks warns. “You need to give equal focus to retention. Thinking about the entire driver life cycle—recruiting to retiring—can help to disrupt the attrition cycle.”

“Team communication is always important, but it’s even more critical with a diverse team,” Pendergast says. “Encourage open, honest communication. Everyone should feel safe and know that their opinion matters.”

A good support system is also essential. “Women juggle work and family. If you set them up for success on the family side (give them time off for a dentist appointment, sick kid, etc.), you will get more loyalty,” Keera Brooks recommends. “Balance leads to success.”

Establishing a women’s group that gives

female employees a chance to get together and discuss issues can be a valuable tool—both for retention and recruiting.

### Moving forward

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that there are 74.6 million women in the civilian workforce today. Time for recruiters to get busy! [n](#)

### Best Practices Guide Coming Soon!

Want to learn more about building a diverse workforce? Check out Women In Trucking’s new *Best Practices Guide to Increasing Women Drivers in the Industry!* Based on a survey of WIT members, this first-ever guide explores challenges and successes and helps to define a clearer path for bringing more women into the industry.

Watch for this guide in the WIT e-News and on [womenintrucking.org](http://womenintrucking.org) this fall.