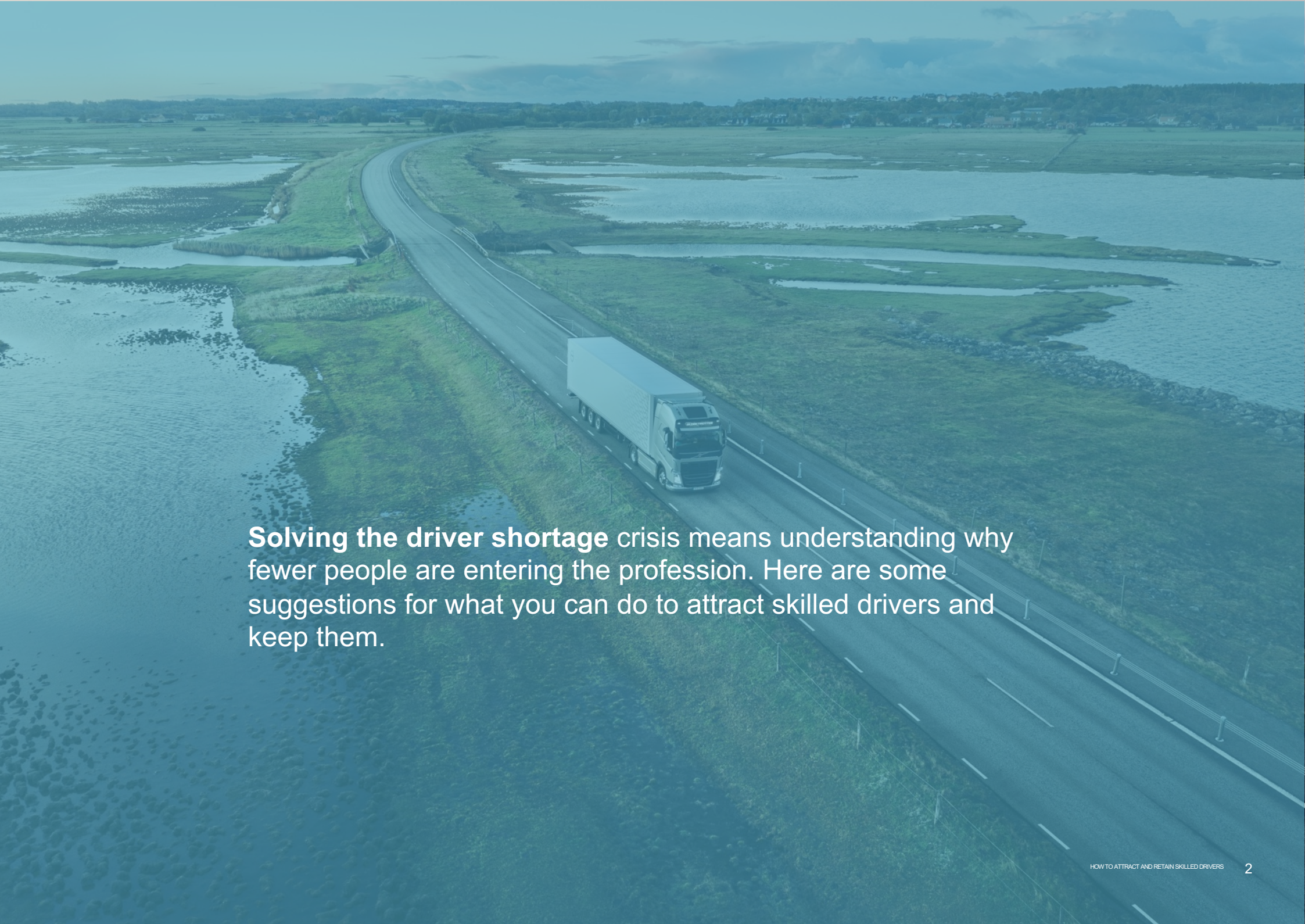




Volvo Trucks. Driving Progress

How to attract and retain skilled drivers



An aerial photograph of a two-lane asphalt road curving along a coastline. A white semi-truck is driving on the road. The landscape is a mix of green grass, marshland, and blue water. In the background, there are some buildings and trees under a cloudy sky.

Solving the driver shortage crisis means understanding why fewer people are entering the profession. Here are some suggestions for what you can do to attract skilled drivers and keep them.

Driver comfort

Tiredness and fatigue are amongst the biggest occupational hazards of being a truck driver. It not only makes the job more demanding but also impacts their quality of life outside of work.

The truck's cab is a driver's main work environment and where they will sit for hours on end. It is vital that you provide an environment that is comfortable and congenial. Good ergonomic seating, climate controls, low noise levels and some in-cab entertainment options are all essential. The cab should also be a comfortable environment for breaks and overnight stops, allowing drivers to sleep and relax. A well-rested driver is more likely to be a happy driver.

It is also worth investing in features and technology that make driving easier. For example, functions like power steering and cruise control can relieve much of the physical strain of driving a large vehicle. Active safety systems and low entry cabs for instance can reduce much of the stress and physical strain of driving in city environments or tight manoeuvring.



Minimise downtime

Unplanned downtime is not only costly for a transport company, it is frustrating for the driver too. Being able to drive a reliable, well-maintained truck can make a difference when it comes to retention. Establishing a solid preventive maintenance program is not only key to getting the most productive use out of your truck but also a great way to improve driver life. Preventive maintenance contracts and diagnostic tools are naturally a part of this as are other tools like GPS, digital tolling and fuelling solutions that can make life on the road easier. Read more about digitalization and how it can drive productivity for your business [here](#).

Digital tools and the data they generate are of course a powerful way to improve your business but it does come with responsibilities. The use of [fleet management tools](#), electronic tachographs and similar technologies means that there is a growing amount of information being collected about drivers. This requires you as a haulage operator to be not only compliant with data protection laws like the GDPR in Europe but also completely transparent with drivers about what data is being stored on them and why. Transparency is not just key to having a good and trusting relationship with drivers but also gives you the opportunity to present the benefits of monitoring as a way to gain better awareness of drivers' working conditions and health indicators. Data and tools to detect driver fatigue can save lives while wearables, [which are gaining traction among drivers](#), can be a good way to let drivers take more responsibility for their health and prevent potential sicknesses.





Safety

Traffic accidents are a very real occupation hazard for trucks drivers. Active safety systems like collision warnings, emergency braking and lane keeping support can provide a lot of reassurance and make drivers feel safer.

Another occupational hazard that scares many drivers is the risk of burglary and assault. It's important that drivers do not feel vulnerable when on the road, especially if sleeping overnight in their cab. There are a number of things you can do to prevent thefts and improve driver safety; one is safety training for drivers that educates them on how to protect the truck from theft and hijacking. You can also invest in active-monitoring services that provide real-time, end-to-end monitoring of cargo shipments through embedded tracking technology.



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Create pride

Everybody wants to feel their work is important and truck drivers are no different. Rewards and bonuses, for example for fuel-efficiency or safe driving, are an effective way of acknowledging skilled drivers and making them feel valued.

Truck drivers also have tremendous pride in their vehicles, and typically have vast technical knowledge of every model and make. The opportunity to give input to the vehicles and services that get added to your fleet can be a great sense of pride as can driving the newest trucks and trying new technologies.





Assist with training

In recent years, the qualifications required to become a truck driver have increased, encompassing things like first aid, safety regulations and loading requirements. This has helped to make the profession more professional, however it has also made the process of becoming a truck driver more time consuming and expensive. For example, in the EU, certification requires 280 hours of training, plus an additional 40 hours every fifth year for renewal.

For many aspiring truck drivers, this can be a hindrance to entering the profession. If you can assist in the process, either by subsidising fees or offering paid time-off for training, this can help secure future recruits.



A photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, smiling broadly, sitting in the driver's seat of a truck. He is wearing a black t-shirt and a lanyard. In the background, another man is visible, also smiling, looking out the window. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting daytime. The image has a blue tint overlay.

Improve image, emphasize the benefits

Truck driving clearly has an image problem, where a lot of people think it is still a physically demanding, low-skilled job. However, the reality today is quite different. Technological advances have made the job far less demanding physically, as well as created demand for new skills and competences. Drivers now need to use various digital and connected services for things like fleet management, navigation and preventative maintenance.

They also require good customer service skills as in many cases they are the public face of their employer. Truck driving also allows a degree of personal freedom that is not found in many other occupations. If we want to attract more applicants, we need to better communicate the daily reality of what it is like to be a truck driver today.



Recruit women and young people

Improving the image of the profession can also help recruit drivers from a broader demographic base. The average truck driver today is male and over 40, leaving women and young people as huge untapped sources for potential drivers.

A number of transport companies have found success by targeting women through recruitment campaigns. Not only has this helped them lessen the impact of the driver shortage, but on average women have proven to be safer drivers and less likely to leave the profession. Others have been working with schools to give young drivers the opportunity to practice during their training or even starting their own training facilities.

Broadening the base of recruits can also open up new possibilities for haulage operators to re-think how they brand and market themselves. Experimenting with new online channels and social media is essential to not just drawing interest from potential new recruits but also to paint a picture of the life, culture and people at your company.



Create a culture that retains drivers

Long hours, moderate pay and no respect are some of the most common grievances driver express about their profession. These concerns can be addressed by building a team-oriented culture that embraces drivers and understands their pain points. If a driver has an issue and they feel they're not being treated fairly, or not being heard, that's a fast track for disengagement.

Quality of life for drivers is also increasingly important; offering a stable environment and a culture focused on not burning drivers is critical for retention and job satisfaction.



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