

****For PSC Insiders Circle Members only****

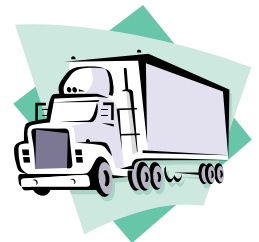
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Friday Safety Brief®

Drivers = The Key to Success

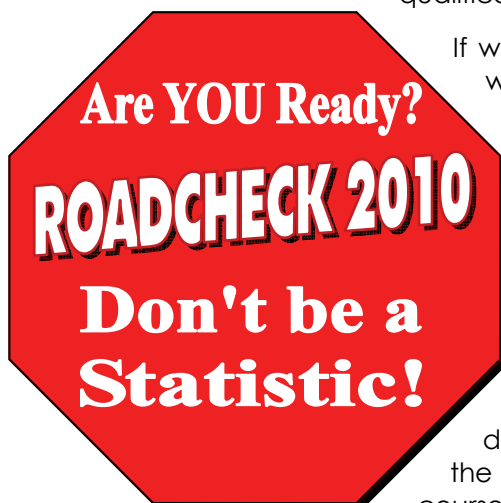
If you are an owner or manager of any type of a transportation company - truck, bus, limo, etc. - you are well aware that the company's success relies very heavily upon the drivers of those vehicles. And, although you are careful in your selection of new drivers, you still attempt to reinforce good driving habits and customer service. Some companies use a lot of resources in their attempts to change any bad driving behaviors and reinforce good ones, while others might use other means, all with varying degrees of success.

Our time spent in the study of driving behaviors exposes a myriad of other studies covering the social psychology involved in everyday driving. One of these position papers, which we found interesting, said that the key to successfully being able to safely reach one's destinations lies, in part, with one's ability to successfully predict the behaviors of others and, of these, control those directed toward one's self. (Individuals vary, of course, in their ability to make such calculations--which is the essence of "EQ" or their "emotional intelligence". They also vary in their ability to control others' feelings, thoughts and behaviors--which are the essences of social power.) In addition, there enters into the equation others' success in predicting one's own behaviors--behaviors whose social successfulness, in turn, are based on one's ability to infer others' anticipations and expectations of one's own actions. Sound complicated? It is.



Other articles talk about modifying driver behavior through "positive reinforcement" (what do I get out of it?) and "negative reinforcement" (what do I lose?). To clarify, using negative reinforcement to modify adult behavior is not "punishment" (the process of adding negative consequences), but rather pointing out the negative consequences that could be avoided if the adult would change his/her behavior. Too often, punishment is used to change adult behavior, which is rarely effective. And, if it is perceived as effective, it is only temporary.

Still, after the research, we wonder whether too much time is spent in attempting to change behaviors. It seems to us that, if you are able to hire the right person for the job, you'd probably spend far less time and effort in trying to change their behaviors. To this statement, most would probably say that they are already doing this; that they are very selective in hiring drivers and in making sure that prospective drivers "meet the company's requirements". However, could it be that we haven't identified ALL of the qualifications for driving?



If we could find out what the applicant's typical driving behaviors are, would it affect our decision as to whether to hire him or her? It probably would. There are several psychological testing companies that you could use, which probably work well. But how well would it work if we were to simply ask the applicant several questions regarding how they handle certain driving situations, as compared to how we would expect a driver to handle them? Assuming those questions were carefully thought out and very inclusive, would the applicant answer those honestly? We probably wouldn't know and maybe it doesn't really matter. If the driver admits to poor driving habits, we certainly would not want to hire him or her. If the answers are positive (what we want), we would hire the driver. If the driver's behaviors then show reason for concern, he or she has broken the commitment made at the time of hire and we would have several courses of action.