

How to Find a Great Truck Driving Job

By Todd McCann

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Let me start off by stating that this book is not complete. Man, what a great way to start! That's possibly the worst opening line of a book ever! I ROCK!

Seriously though, that doesn't mean it doesn't have a lot of thought put into it; it does. But the fact is, *How To Find A Great Truck Driving Job* is a work in progress and it always will be. And it's a process I hope you'll help me with.

Let me explain how the book works to help clarify this. In the beginning, I cover some of the problems that exist when it comes to dealing with trucking companies and their hiring processes.

Ultimately though, *How To Find A Great Truck Driving Job* is a [list of questions](#) that you should ask a prospective employer before you decide to drive for them. With each of these questions is a brief (sometimes) explanation of why you're asking this question.

So basically, here's why this book is a work in progress. If I wanted to provide you with an exhaustive list of questions, I would've had to work for every trucking company in the world *and* had the foresight to ask them every possible question about everything there was to know about working for them. As you can see, that's just not doable. Heck, I usually don't even have the foresight to buy a jar of jelly when I'm stocking up on peanut butter.

Instead, I've put together a list of questions from the knowledge I've obtained in my two decades of trucking. As time goes on, I hope that readers like you will discover a question or two (or seven) I've left out and send it in. Every now and then I will update the book giving all contributors credit for their suggested questions. Whaaaaaaa? Your name in a book! You'll be a superstar! Where's that eye roll emoji when you need it?

So as you gain experience and learn new things about the trucking industry and the company(s) you work for, please remember to write down any question(s) I've missed and send them to AboutTruckDriving@gmail.com along with your name and hometown.

In other words, you'll be paying it forward to help all the new drivers coming into the industry behind you. If all goes according to plan, this book will be better in ten years than it is now... all thanks to you. Thanks. Now go have a piece of chocolate cake. You deserve it.

But before we get too far into this thing, why don't I tell you a little bit about myself so you'll know where I'm coming from.

[About The Author](#)

Hi there! My name is Todd McCann. I'd like to give you a brief background about myself, just in case you haven't already read my book entitled [Trucking Life](#).

I was preparing to attend architecture classes at Kansas State University, when my life took a 180-degree turn. At the time I had a wife and tons of debt (hmm, is there a correlation there?) from some unwise financial and educational choices. In order to keep the debt collectors at bay, we were both going to need to hold down full-time jobs while I attended school.

Unfortunately, the university instructors told me that it was nigh impossible to work full-time and still have time to complete the course work needed to graduate. Bummer. Time for plan B.

At the time, I was working as a dockhand at an egg-packing plant, where I spoke with truck drivers on a daily basis. I was soon convinced that if I could coax my wife, Lorinda—a.k.a. [The Evil Overlord](#), to drive a truck with me for a year or two, we could pay off our debts and get back to KSU and my architecture degree. She agreed, but somehow I never got back to school. That was in 1997 and I've driven a truck ever since.

Along the way, I have naturally picked up a few tidbits about the trucking industry. My previous book, [Trucking Life](#), was written to give curious folks like you a peek into the trucking lifestyle.

Despite what you might be thinking, the book doesn't tell you whether you *should* or *shouldn't* get into trucking. In a fun, story-driven way, it simply tells you what truck driving is all about and leaves it up to you to decide. If you wind up thinking that truck driving might be right for you, the last part of [Trucking Life](#) covers how to become a trucker.

Unfortunately, when I got into trucking there was absolutely no information like this available. There are more resources nowadays than there were back then, but there still isn't a truckload of it (cheesy pun intended). And while some of the other books out there are pretty good, some of them are just plain horrendous. So I decided to do something about it.

If you are considering a career as a professional truck driver, do both of us a favor by ordering [Trucking Life](#). If you aren't currently online, please go [AboutTruckDriving.com](#) and check it out when you get a chance.

But what's this current book, *How to Find a Great Truck Driving Job*, all about? Read on.

[The Driver Retention Problem](#)

Have you ever heard the term “turnover rate?” If you’re a trucker, you most certainly have. If you’re not a trucker yet, the term “turnover rate” might sound like a fast food training term that is used to describe how often you need to flip the burgers to keep them from burning. Trust me, it’s not.

Turnover rate is a term used by employers to show how often they have to replace workers. For trucking companies, it’s mainly used in association with drivers, since that’s where the highest turnover rate is.

The [American Trucking Association \(ATA\)](#) estimates the industry average [driver turnover rate to be 92 percent](#), which just plain stinks. But quite frankly, 92 percent is a joy compared to the [130 percent turnover rate back in 2005](#).

To clarify these numbers, a 130 percent turnover rate means that every year a carrier has to replace every driver once (100 percent), plus another 30 percent. Now let that sink in.

In practical terms, this means that if a carrier has 1000 drivers, they will have to hire 1300 new drivers in the coming year to replace ones that have retired, quit, or been fired. That sucks, huh? You’re probably thinking, “*Why is the turnover rate so high?*”

There are five main reasons why trucking companies have trouble retaining drivers:

1. The trucking lifestyle
2. Constantly changing pay packages
3. Lack of driver respect
4. Drivers get into trucking with unrealistic expectations
5. Drivers don’t take enough time to find a job that suits them

Let’s take a brief look at each one of these problems.

1. The trucking lifestyle

Driving a truck can be hard on a person, both physically and mentally. On the physical side, sitting and staring at the open road for up to 11 hours per day can be hard on your body, not to mention as boring as watching a snail marathon. Although I’m sure their teeny little Nikes are rather adorable.

Emotionally, as a solo over-the-road (OTR) driver you usually aren’t home every night, therefore you tend to miss your family and your social life. Even if you have a co-driver

or a rider (explained in bit) to keep you from getting too lonely, you're still missing an awful lot of stuff at home.

No job is perfect and trucking is no different. Some people love it, while others would rather take a dip in a shark tank with a paper cut on their finger. If you can learn to cope with some of the down sides of trucking, it can be a very rewarding experience, both personally and financially. If you can't, don't even consider trucking. My first book, [Trucking Life](#) can help you figure out if trucking might be right for you.

As I mentioned before, in it you'll learn about both the good and bad things about trucking; not by me telling you what's good or bad, but by explaining what it's like to drive a truck and what you'll deal with on a daily basis. You can decide from there.

2. Constantly changing pay packages

[The Evil Overlord](#) (wife and ex codriver – follow the link for why she's called that) and I have worked for five different companies as team drivers. I switched companies once more after she got out of trucking, so that makes six different companies for me.

We left three of those companies to make more money at another carrier. It wasn't that we were unhappy—as a matter of fact, we really liked most of those companies. That's just the way the trucking industry works. Because good drivers are needed so badly, carriers are always trying to boost their pay or find other incentives to lure drivers away from other companies. The tactic works like a catfish drawn to stink bait.

Still, we hated changing jobs, so in order for us to leave a company that we liked we always required a significant increase in pay and/or benefits. For example, we left our first trucking company after one year for a nine-cent per mile increase with another company. Even for a team with our little experience, that was a \$20,000 increase per year! We loved our first trucking company but that much of a pay hike just couldn't be passed up.

Please don't think we made this decision lightly. We didn't jump ship without thoroughly checking out the new company first. If we had found out that the prospective employer had a horrible reputation, we would have stayed where we were until a better opportunity arose.

The drawback to blindly following higher wages is that the increased mileage pay may not always translate into more money in your pocket.

For instance, the new company may be willing to pay you more money per mile, but are you going to get as many miles as you're getting with your current company? Then again, if a company is paying you more per mile, you probably need fewer miles to make the same amount of money.

Well now, isn't that as clear as your windshield during a February blizzard? Let's run the

wipers for a minute to clear things up. Dang it! Why does the passenger-side wiper always work better than the driver's side?

As an example, in order to make \$1000 gross pay, a driver making 35 cents per mile would have to run 2,857 miles (1000 divided by .35). But if that driver were making 40 cents per mile, they would only need to run 2,500 miles to make the same \$1000 (1000 divided by .40). Therefore, what you're looking for is the most money per mile combined with plenty of miles. Duh. See why you need to get the facts about those miles before you jump hapazardously to another company?

Leaving a company you like and are comfortable with should never be taken lightly. Even if the pay hike is great, if you wind up at a bad company because you didn't research them first, you'll be as miserable as a rodeo bull rider with a scorching case of hemorrhoids. Sure, your old company will likely rehire you, but wouldn't it be much easier to have never left in the first place?

Still, if a lot of carriers are raising pay but yours isn't, it may be time to start looking around. Just take it slow, research a plethora (I learned that word from [The Three Amigos](#)) of companies, and compare them all with your handy-dandy questionnaire.

We will be discussing how to use the [questionnaire](#) in more detail in the [How To Use This Book](#) chapter coming up soon.

3. "I get no respect!!"

Those famous words from [Rodney Dangerfield](#) could be the official slogan of truckers. To start with, many automobile drivers don't give truckers the respect that an 80,000-pound vehicle deserves. Hence, you're busy dodging moronic drivers all day long. Of course, that insult doesn't pertain to *you*. I'm sure you're a perfectly safe driver who has *never* done anything stupid around a truck. Pshhht!

Another source of disrespect comes from shippers and consignees.

"The term "shipper" is self-explanatory, but what in God's holy name is a "consignee?" Consignee is the legal name for the company that is receiving the load. For some odd reason, that word is like nails on a chalkboard to me, so henceforth they will be called the "receiver." Who the heck uses words like "consignee" anyway? Oh yeah, lawyers. No wonder I hate it.

Back to the point: some shippers/receivers show their disrespect by making drivers wait for hours on end before loading or unloading their freight. Since you generally aren't making money unless you're moving down the road, waiting at docks hits you where it hurts. No, not there. . . your wallet. But it kinda feels like you're getting punched in the junk.

Some drivers say that the trucking companies disrespect them, too. Sometimes

they're correct. Sometimes they're not.

Despite what many drivers may tell you, there are plenty of trucking companies that actually do respect their drivers. Smart dispatchers (a trucker's immediate boss) know that without drivers to move the freight, their jobs are obsolete.

Not to mention that the company itself can't exist without drivers. Driver pay is actually one of the carrier's largest operating expenses, so if a company doesn't respect you, I guess that means they're about as bright as a Bic lighter in a California wildfire. Still, even your own *friendly* employer can show a lack of respect when the right (or should I say wrong) circumstances occur. For instance. . .

If you happen to call someone in the office when you're having a really bad day and you snap at the person on the other end of the line, they may bite back if they're having an equally bad day.

You wouldn't be the first driver to needlessly lose his cool and tell the company "where they can stick their truck." Nor would you be the last. I did that once and I still regret it. Years later, they still won't consider rehiring me.

For the record, I'm not that disappointed about it. My dispatcher told me to do something that was "officially" against policy and when I get caught by the higher-ups, the jerk denied telling me it was okay. Grrrr. But I'm not bitter. Okay, let's move on before I go sucker punch some random stranger.

4. Know what you're getting into

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to jump into trucking before you've figured out if you're the type of person who can handle the lifestyle. "*Ahhh, the lure of the open road! I can't wait to see the world!*" Sounds enticing, doesn't it?

Whoa there, Nellie! Over the years I've talked to countless drivers who got into trucking because their best friend's cousin's brother said he loved it. But he's not you. Sure, you might actually love it. Then again you might hate it just as bad as some of those guys did.

So basically, you've just wasted valuable time, money, and effort starting a new career that you now hate. Smooth move, Ex-Lax. And all because you didn't figure out what trucking was really like before you jumped on the bandwagon. So, how do you figure out if *you* can handle trucking? I'm glad you asked.

You really need to get the *facts* about trucking, not just *opinions*.

Unfortunately, real life facts about trucking from an unbiased point of view are hard to find, whereas you know what they say about opinions. So where can you find unbiased information? It's time for some more shameless self-promotion.

If you aren't a trucker yet, but are strongly considering it, do yourself a huge favor and get those illusive facts by ordering [Trucking Life](#) right now. I sure wish someone had written something similar before I got started. That way I could have made a more informed decision.

One of my Trucker Dump podcast listeners Steven backed me up when he left an audio comment on episode [TD116: Trucker and Diabetes](#) that said, "I wish this book was out when I first started driving a truck because I have fallen into some of the same mistakes that Todd talks about in the book. This book has great tips and advice that cover more than just trucking." (21:10 mark)

When The Evil Overlord and I were considering trucking as a career, we searched everywhere for unbiased information. No such luck. Heck, we could barely find any *opinionated* information.

Back in 1997, the Internet was still this weird thing that nobody knew how to use; at least not in a small town in Missouri. I remember thinking I was a tech god because I managed to get into a chat room! I searched the local libraries and bookstores for books about trucking but the only thing I could find were a few technical books for mechanics.

That meant we had to make a decision based on talking to the few truck drivers that picked up loads at a place I worked. Even then, it seemed that trucking was defined by the kind of day those drivers were having.

One day a driver would hate trucking. Two days later he'd be back on my dock, bragging about his paycheck and loving life, his job, and me. Okay, that last one's a bit of an exaggeration, thank God!

So you can see that talking to a truck driver one time didn't give me the facts about trucking, but it did tell me what kind of mood he was in on that particular day. By the way, what do you get when you put 50 truckers in a basement? A whine cellar. Yes, that joke is as cheesy as a plate full of delicious nachos, but it's got a lot of truth to it.

In hindsight, I didn't get a very good view of what trucking was *really* like before I jumped in. Again, I refer you to [Trucking Life](#) if you want the truth about trucking. Seriously, you do owe it to yourself to get the facts. The last thing you want or need is to be trapped in a career you might hate. Isn't that what you're trying to escape now?

Even if you don't get this information from me, get it from somewhere. There are other similar sources online, but they can't possibly be as good as mine. Right? Hey! No eye rolling!

5. Take the time to find a company that suits you

And that's where *this* book comes in handy. Recommendations of companies by other drivers are definitely useful, but you can't always take their opinion as gospel. "Well,

they wouldn't be working there if it wasn't great!" Probably not. But great for whom?

What's that? You mean he didn't bother to tell you that the company he works for requires you to stay out on the road for three to four weeks at a time? What if you had planned on being home every weekend or every two weeks?

Or what if he forgot to mention that every time you come home, you're required to leave your truck at the company terminal, which means that you'll have to drive an extra 150 miles to and from your house in your Beverly Hillbillies clunker-mobile?

That would suck for you but he may live two blocks from the terminal. No wonder he thinks it's great! To make matters worse (for you, not him), most companies pay bonuses to drivers who recruit other truckers. Still think he's totally unbiased?

You've already taken a step in the right direction by starting to read this book.

You're leaps and bounds ahead of most drivers just by reading this and using the included questionnaire (more on this in a bit). With this information, you should be able to find a company that suits the majority of your needs.

Who Is This Book For?

Let me start out by saying that the information in this book is designed to help the brand new driver find his or her first truck driving job. Having said that, an experienced driver can still find some useful information, especially the interview questionnaire that will ensure you remember to ask all the right questions the next time you're job hunting.

Just keep in mind, I'm writing this primarily for those folks who are new to trucking, so don't get all cranky if I start explaining something as simple as getting "paid by the mile." Remember, not so long ago we were all rookies. If you own your truck and/or book your own freight, this book will be as useless to you as a Lamborghini in an LA traffic jam.

I have driven company trucks my entire career, which started in 1997. The Evil Overlord was my co-driver for nine of those years, so whether you're planning on driving as a team or as a solo, we've got you covered. I've worked for six different trucking companies and during that time we have worked for some carriers that fit us well and some that didn't.

Did you notice how I worded that last sentence? In my first draft, that sentence ended, "...and have worked for both good and bad carriers." After I reread that statement, I had to go back and amend it because it might lead you to believe that there are *good* companies and there are *bad* companies, when in fact, **there is no one company that is right for everyone.**

Your goal, and the goal of this book, is to help you find the trucking company that suits *you* best. And that's the best you can hope for.

Eventually this thought will probably hit you, so I'll go ahead and address it now.

You've worked for six different trucking companies!! I thought you knew how to find a great company that I'll want to stay with!! I do. . . now. . . after much trial-and-error. But that still doesn't mean you'll work for only one trucking company in your driving career. That's just not how things work in trucking. I'll talk more on that subject later in the book.

In fact, each job we had got better as we went along, mostly because we learned the right questions to ask. Luckily for you, those questions are included in the [questionnaire](#). At the time of this writing, I've been with my current company for over 10 years. It is by far the best one yet (for me), but there are still a few things I don't like about it. That's why I'm always keeping my eyes peeled for greener pastures. You know, the thing with green pastures is that there's almost always a big cow pie just waiting to be stepped in.

Eventually I figured out all the right questions to ask, but even then I would inevitably forget to ask a few questions here or there because I hadn't put together a plan before I

started my job search. Those few unasked questions usually turned out to be the ones that would come back to haunt me. It's been said that wisdom comes from learning from your mistakes. If that's true, then Einstein ain't got squat on me.

I decided to write this book because I was never fully prepared when I started a job search. So I figured that if I didn't have a written plan, I'm sure many other drivers don't either.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, not only will this book tell you *what* questions to ask, but it will also explain *why* you are asking those questions. Most people outside of trucking don't understand the simplest of trucking terms, such as the previously mentioned "paid by the mile." Sure, it sounds obvious, but there's more to it than meets the eye...kinda like Optimus Prime.

So don't worry about it if you don't know what an "inverter" is, or if you've never heard of a "lumper" before. And if you don't know who Optimus Prime is, then please stop reading this book. I can no longer associate with the likes of you.

This book will explain a lot of these trucking terms and why it's important to ask a prospective employer about them before you go to work for them.

The [questionnaire](#) is there for you to print out as many copies as you need, for as long as you need them. And since the trucking industry really hasn't changed much over the years, it's likely the majority of these questions will be valid for years to come. With a checklist of questions right there in front of you, you'll know exactly what to ask your recruiter.

My what? Easy there. I'll explain who a recruiter is in a jiffy. Just print out one questionnaire for each prospective employer and compile all the information on that particular company. Once you've gathered the necessary information on each company, it should be a lot easier to compare one trucking company to another.

If you want to save a lot of tedious phone time, you could (and probably should) compile much of the information you'll need by visiting the company's web site or by having a recruiter mail you a driver information packet.

By filling out most of the information before you call, you can concentrate more on verifying information, rather than frantically writing while they are rattling off all the gory details. Although I have to say, those snail-mail driver information packets are often nothing more than a, "Hey, look how awesome we are" promotion.

Okay. A jiffy has arrived. Before we get on with this book, we need a brief explanation of who you'll be dealing with during your job search. . . the infamous recruiter.

Recruiters. . . Friend Or Foe?

An old joke: How can you tell if a lawyer is lying? His lips are moving.

You could replace the word “lawyer” with many occupations. With the 2016 presidential election fresh in our minds, naturally politicians come to mind. But for the purposes of truckers, “recruiters” would fit the bill. But do they deserve that reputation? Let’s discuss that and more.

Recruiters are the gatekeepers of trucking companies.

They are the people that are responsible for “recruiting” drivers to work for their company. As a driver, if you have an interest in working for a particular company, you’ll probably call an 800 number and talk to a recruiter.

After talking to many different recruiters from different companies, you’ll narrow down your choices. Once you make your decision, your recruiter is the person that will guide you through the rest of the hiring process. Unfortunately, you may never meet your recruiter face-to-face.

Larger trucking companies usually have to hire from all over the United States to get enough drivers to fill their trucks. That’s just the nature of the beast.

Unfortunately, that means that most of the hiring is done over the phone. And it’s a lot easier for someone to lie to you over the phone than it is to your face. That certainly explains why that varsity cheerleader always had plans when you called to ask her out on a date. So however unlikely it is, if you can talk face-to-face, by all means do so.

Before we go any further, let me clarify where my job-hunting experience lies.

I have never worked for a small company (1000 trucks or less) and probably never will. I have my reasons, which I discuss in detail in [*Trucking Life*](#), but for now let’s talk about my experience with recruiters for smaller companies.

I openly admit that I haven’t dealt with very many. Of those that I have, I have mixed feelings. Being a smaller company tends to promote an “I’m your buddy” type of attitude, but I’ve talked to some really nice guys and gals that I didn’t entirely trust.

One particular recruiter was super nice on the phone. As fate would have it, I found myself stranded without a load in their town one day and I went to talk with him face-to-face.

I still thought he was a nice guy as he gave me the tour and introduced me to everyone in the office, which consisted of five whole people. All of them were ultra-friendly and I started to get an “at home” kind of feeling.

Then I was introduced to the owner himself, who was also very nice. I'm telling you, there was so much niceness in that building, it could almost make a man want to puke up his McGriddles. I talked with him for about two hours and was feeling so good about the whole ordeal that I filled out an application and did a pre-employment drug screen right there on the spot.

He suggested that I stick around and talk to some of the drivers after-hours, so I did. He was a moron for suggesting that, but man I'm glad he did. I found out that once you were an employee, the owner transformed into a controlling, tightwad-of-a-jerk with slave master tendencies.

Despite this, the drivers were generally happy with their jobs because of the money they were making. When I related all the information I had been told by the owner and recruiter, they gave me a knowing smile and said, "*Yea, sure. We heard all that too.*"

What neither the owner or the recruiter bothered to tell me was how I was going to have to run illegal log books nearly every day and get very little sleep just to get the job done and make all that money. No thanks. The money was good, but not that good. And trust me when I say that I need my beauty sleep.

So you can see that niceness can be very misleading. That's not to say that large company recruiters can't kill you with kindness also. They can, and sometimes do. So beware either way.

And when possible, you should always compare what the recruiters say to what the drivers are saying. I give you some tips on getting information from drivers in [Trucking Life](#) if you need some help with that.

Now that I've sat here and told you that "recruiters" are synonymous with "liars," let me clarify that a bit.

Among truckers, recruiters certainly have a reputation for lying, but in my experience that's not entirely true. Sure, I've run into a handful of bald-faced liars over the years, but by and large I'm convinced that most recruiters get a bad rap because of a simple lack of communication between the driver and the recruiter.

For instance, most recruiters have a list of things that they're supposed to discuss with drivers, but drivers don't usually bother making up their own list of questions to ask the recruiter. Ta-dahhhh! Now you've got a list! Well you should have by now anyway. I've only linked to it about 457 times already. If not, [download the questionnaire now!](#)

You've got to remember that when you're speaking with a recruiter, it's basically a substitution for the typical job interview.

Most people think of a job interview as a one-sided affair; where an interviewer asks all the questions while you sit and dutifully answer them. I beg to differ.

I once took a career class where the teacher told me that a job interview should be a two-way street. In other words, you should ask your share of questions too. You can't expect them to anticipate your every question. You've got to be prepared to ask the questions that they haven't covered. As a matter of fact, maybe there's a reason they aren't covering certain topics.

Here's a classic example of this: The Evil Overlord and I had gone through the entire recruiting process at a trucking company, attended orientation, and started team driving for them. Everything was going well until the first time a holiday rolled around and we didn't get paid for it, even though we had worked on that particular day. After a quick call to the payroll department, we learned that this particular company didn't even have holiday pay. No wonder our paychecks were light!

You see, we had always received holiday pay from our previous employers and had just assumed that this company would pay it also. If you've ever seen the movie *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, you know what Samuel L. Jackson's character says about making assumptions. [You make an "ass" out of "u" and "mption."](#)

Think the recruiter lied to me? Well, I hadn't asked about holiday pay and they hadn't bothered to mention it. Does that make them a liar? I don't think so. Look at it this way.

Say I'm trying to sell a 4X4 Jeep. When a buyer approaches me, do I start out by telling him about all its flaws? *"Dude. This thing is awesome. I've mowed down some trees with this thing! And I can tell ya it's been through its fair share of mud pits in its day too! But look! There's hardly any rust on it yet! I'm kinda surprised it's still got plenty of power, considering all the miles it's got on it and all the abuse I've put it through! And I only got it stuck in the river once."* Good luck selling it like that.

Likewise, a recruiter is not going to brag about the company's flaws. I can hear it now. *"Our pay is on par with the rest of the industry, but we don't pay holiday pay like some companies do. Oh, and by the way, like most other trucking companies, we don't pay you for every mile you run either. And did I mention that those bonuses I told you about are completely unattainable?"* Why would they focus on their negatives? Now all of these things may be true, but they aren't going to tell you about it. . . **unless you ask.**

Like I said, it's partly the interviewee's responsibility to ask the right questions. Getting back to our Jeep scenario, if the buyer asks me if it's been used off-road much, I'm obligated to tell the truth. If I lie and the buyer later finds out, I can be held liable.

The same goes with your recruiter. If you ask them if the company has holiday pay, they're obligated to tell you. If they tell you that you'll be paid for holidays, then later you find out you were lied to, then you've got good reason to complain.

Also, asking the right questions puts you in the best position to make a wise decision. If you were the buyer in that Jeep scenario, you'd want to take the Jeep to your mechanic so

you can get as much information as possible. That way you can make an educated decision as to whether you still want to buy it. If you know what's wrong with it, you're likely to get a better deal on it, too.

Here again, if you ask your recruiter all the right questions, you can decide if that particular company is going to be a good fit for you or not. If it's not, keep looking. There are gobs of trucking jobs to choose from. Gobs... Good Lord. Am I a vocabulary giant or what?

All recruiters are not created equal.

There's no doubt; if recruiters had Pinocchio noses, some of them could be hands-free pole-vaulting champions. Unfortunately, it's really hard to tell whether someone is lying over the phone. Other times, you get a prickly feeling in your ear. Watch out! It's that nose coming through the phone line!

Want the first step to figuring out if your recruiter might be tempted to lie to you?

Find out what is motivating them by asking one simple question: *"Are you paid by commission?"* Sure, they might think you're rude, but you have the right to know what is motivating them. And if you word this question correctly, they won't be able to get offended.

Here's how: When you pop the question, just immediately tell them that you want to make sure they get paid for talking to you. If they work on salary, they won't care either way. If they're on commission, it will look good that you want to make sure that they're getting paid for helping you.

Keep in mind that this only applies if the recruiter is actually being helpful. If they aren't, call back at another time and hope you get a different person. If you get the same person again, ask for someone else or call back until you get a different one. Most of the larger carriers have more than one recruiter, so you'll get lucky eventually. You may be screwed if it's a small company though.

Either way, the recruiter knows what you are hinting at: that salaried employees are more likely to be honest than those paid by commission. But at least you've said it nicely!

Is it true? Are commission-based recruiters more likely to lie?

Common sense tells me yes, but I have absolutely no solid proof to support that statement. What I do have is tons of phone time with recruiters. *"How so? You've only worked for six companies."* Yes, but just because I've only worked for six different trucking companies doesn't mean that I've only talked to six recruiters. For each job search, I talked to dozens of recruiters in the process of finding the best job available at the time.

Generally, what I've discovered is that salaried recruiters tend to be more forthright about their company.

They still aren't going to actively promote the negative aspects of their company but they tend to be less eager than their commissioned counterparts. I've gotten some surprisingly truthful responses to some tough questions from salaried recruiters.

For example, I asked one salaried recruiter if he had heard what the drivers' biggest complaints were about the company. He actually told me that he had heard a lot of complaining about a particular division within the company and he suggested I avoid it at all costs.

When I told him I was a little surprised he would tell me that, he said, "I've got no reason to lie. I get paid whether you come to work for us or not. Besides, if I'm dishonest you'll call me out on it later, so why lie?" So, maybe I do have some proof for my accusation.

And that's my point. Salaried recruiters have less reason to lie. They get paid no matter what. Commissioned recruiters, however, only get paid if they "make the sale," so their motivation factor is high.

Another thing I've noticed is that salaried recruiters tend to be better informed than those paid on commission.

That's not to say that they're smarter, it's just that there seems to be a higher turnover rate on commissioned recruiters. That's just common sense. The less time spent on a job, the less you know about it.

For example, I have one large national trucking company (a former employer) that calls me every now and then to ask if I'm ready to come back. This particular company not only puts their recruiters on commission, but they're independent contractors to boot.

What this means is that nearly every time I get a call from them, I'm speaking to a different person. When I tell them that I've been talking to Recruiter X, they usually say, "*Recruiter X is no longer with the company. I've taken over her list of drivers.*" What's worse, sometimes the pay rates and other quoted information are completely different from what the last recruiter said.

This can cause countless problems. I tell a story in [Trucking Life](#) about how a bunch of drivers in our orientation group were told by their recruiters that they would be making 38 cents per mile. Once in class, they were surprised when the class instructor told them they had been misinformed and they'd actually be making less money per mile than what their recruiters had quoted them.

Later on, we found out that most of them had different recruiters, which meant that there had been a major miscommunication somewhere along the line. Does that mean that those drivers were lied to? In this case it sounded like the recruiters were simply

misinformed, not forked-tongue liars.

On the other hand, when The Evil Overlord left me as a solo driver, I went looking for a more solo-friendly company. I've already mentioned how much we liked the first company we ever worked for.

Even way back then, they were better suited for solo drivers than for their teams, which you may recall prompted us to leave for more pay with a team-oriented company. So, when I became a solo driver, that company immediately came to mind.

I called them again and guess who answered? No, it wasn't the recruiter that hired us in 1997 (that would be too good of a story), but it was a guy we had met way back then. This was 2005, so eight years later, this (salaried) guy was still working as a recruiter for the same company.

And let me tell you, this guy had an answer for everything I tossed at him. It didn't work out for me in the end, but it does illustrate how salary can equal longevity and superior knowledge when it comes to recruiters.

One last word on recruiters: If it sounds too good to be true. . .

A good indicator of an honest recruiter is a willingness to tell you that their company isn't perfect. Then again, they know this. So maybe it's a tactic. Until we can equip all recruiters with Pinocchio noses and videophones, you're going to have to depend largely on your instincts. And that tickle in your ear. Good luck!

So let's find your perfect job!

Okay, I admit it. There is no such thing as a perfect job. If you find one, let me know. Did you notice the title of this book? It's *How to Find a Great Truck Driving Job*. Notice it says a *great* job, not a *perfect* job.

It is said in trucking that your goal is to "Find a recruiter whose lies suit you best." I've addressed the whole "lying recruiter" thing, but that mantra could also say, "Your goal is to find a company whose negatives you can live with." Or perhaps more bluntly, "Find a company that you don't completely hate."

Your goal is not to find a perfect job. It doesn't exist. I'll bet even taste testers for Ben & Jerry's complain about brain freezes. And those poor Victoria's Secret photographers probably whine about sand getting everywhere on a beach bikini shoot.

Your duty is to find the best truck driving job that you can for what you want out of the job. Keep this in mind as you talk to recruiters, fill out the questionnaires, and compare trucking companies.

[How To Use This Book](#)

This book is designed to help you easily find information while you're talking to recruiters. We will discuss each question in order as it's found on the [questionnaire](#). That way, if you need to refresh your memory about a particular question or topic, you'll be able to easily find it since everything is laid out in numerical order.

Probably the best thing to do is leave this book open to the [Table of Contents](#) while you talk to the recruiter. All the links to the questions are right there in a handy dandy list! If you need a quick refresher, click the relevant link and jump right to the question.

Okay, let's get started.

Step 1: Seriously, if you haven't downloaded the [questionnaire](#) yet, do it now. And congratulations, you've just won the Procrastinator of the Year award! I would suggest downloading the questionnaire onto a computer since it's easier to print from than a phone. Go to the Downloads folder, open the file (called Trucking Company Questionnaire), and print one copy for each trucking company you plan to call.

Feel free to print off as many as you need for your personal use. Just don't resell them or I'll have to get some high-dollar attorney after you. You don't want that and I don't want to pad some slimy lawyer's pockets.

Step 2: Go to the trucking company's website and enter the company name and phone number at the top of the questionnaire. Find as much information as you can ahead of time and fill out the questionnaire as best you can. At the very least, they should have some driver requirements and pay package information. This will make it easier to verify information during the call instead of frantically writing while the recruiter is yapping.

Step 3: Decide which questions you want to ask first. Don't feel you need to follow the order laid out precisely. If it's important that you take your annoying little Shih Tzu, then ask if they accept pets first. Fresh out of truck driving school? Ask if they hire students. You get the idea.

Step 4: Call the company's recruiting department and make sure you immediately get the recruiter's name and an extension number. That way, if you need to talk to them again you won't be talking to a new recruiter who doesn't know you or your situation.

Again, keep in mind that your conversation won't go step-by-step according to your questionnaire.

Your recruiter may well jump into a standardized dialogue that is designed to cover all the major topics. It may go something like this:

You: "Hi. I saw your ad in a trucking magazine and was wondering how much experience is required to work for you?"

You're expecting a simple number like "one year," but instead she takes a big lungful of air and bombards you with a script. Brace yourself.

Recruiter: "We require one year of verifiable over-the-road experience, a hazmat endorsement, no more than two moving violations in the last three years, no more than one preventable accident in the last two years, and no DUI's within the last seven years. We have 97 percent no-touch freight, 80 percent drop and hook, extra stop pay, holiday pay, fuel bonuses, referral bonuses, great benefits, and a 401K, which we'll match your first 6 percent up to \$2000 per year."

Then she takes a deep breath. Whoa. And to think, you only asked one simple question!

What now? First, bend down and pick your jaw up off the floor. Dirt only tastes good to kids, you know (the little weirdos). Now take a deep breath. Okay. If this is your first search for a driving job, you'd probably be confused by some of those terms. That's one reason why the best thing you can do is read this book in its entirety before you call a recruiter.

If you don't, you might as well call a Chinese neurosurgeon and ask him how the brain works, because you'll make about the same amount of sense out of either conversation.

Again, the best plan is to get as much of the information as possible before you call and jot it down on your questionnaire before you dial the phone. Then you can simply verify that the information is correct when you're speaking with a recruiter and you can ask any follow-up questions you may have.

Lastly, remember that this is as close to a job interview as you're going to get, so the questions *should* flow both ways. Some recruiters will take it nice and slow. Others will charge through it like an NFL fullback heading for the goal line. Grab that sucker by the jersey and yank it back to your pace.

Make sure you get the answers to all your questions.

If it's easier for you, just tell them you have a list of questions and you'd like to take them in order to ensure that they all get answered. They won't care for that much, but "tough titty said the kitty." This is your livelihood we're talking here.

You know, I suddenly have a feeling that one day I'll discover that trucking company recruiters across America have formed a "Todd McCann sucks" Facebook group, all thanks to truckers asking questions from this questionnaire. Oh well.

Man, this is going to take forever! Not necessarily. Remember step three? You may find out early in the conversation that you either don't want to work for this particular company or that you simply don't meet their minimum requirements.

As rookies, many of our first job hunts ended after one of the first questions: How much experience do you require? One year? Well crap. End of conversation and on to the next company.

You may also find questions that you can totally skip. Don't have a dog you want to bring along? You can skip that question. Although you might want to ask anyway in case you change your mind later on. The road can be a lonely place, after all.

I repeat; you should probably alter the order of the questions to keep from wasting time.

For example, let's say you've seen an advertisement that made you interested in a particular company, but their pay rate wasn't listed in the ad. For some odd reason, money seems to be important to most people. Go figure.

So maybe you move that up on your list, to say... oh I don't know... how about the first question? Pay per mile isn't the only deciding factor, but it can be a big one. So you open with a question: "Your ad didn't mention how much you pay. Why is that?"

It may just be that their pay package is hard to explain. It may be that they want you to call so they can do their sales pitch. Then again, it may be because it's so much lower than all of their competitors that they knew they wouldn't get any calls if they listed it. That would be a good thing to know before you went any further, wouldn't it?

A personal example of prioritizing your questions is The Evil Overlord's love of inverters. *Isn't that the thing that powered the car in Back to the Future?* No, that was the flux capacitor, you silly goose.

Simply put, an inverter is a device that lets you plug in appliances that have standard 2 or 3-prong electrical plugs. Last time I checked, those plugs don't fit very well into your standard 12-volt port (previously known as cigarette lighters). You could try it, but you might your hair might end up looking like Buckwheat when you're done.

This was very important to The Evil Overlord, because without an inverter she couldn't power a microwave oven, blow dryer, curling iron, etc. You know, girly stuff. Seriously though, they are convenient.

So because a handful of companies still don't allow inverters in their trucks and others only allow small ones, we always moved this question way up on the list. She could live without her blow dryer, but asking her to do without a microwave oven is like asking Jerry Springer to eliminate toothless rednecks from his show.

Other common reasons to jump a question to the front of the line are concerning pets and people who may want to ride along. We'll have more on that in a jiffy, too. Man, I've been using the word jiffy a lot lately, which is especially weird since I'm more of a Skippy-kinda-guy. So in that case, I guess we'll get to more on that in a skippy.

Anyway, how much experience you have can also be a major factor. Basically, if something is extremely important to you or may disqualify you right away (such as a criminal record or vehicle accidents), ask about it up front so you're not wasting your time. You could be doing something more productive right now, like baking me some banana bread. Well? Go on! Get in the kitchen, punk!

Before we get started...

I'm going to assume that you've either graduated from a truck driving school and have obtained your Commercial Driver's License (CDL), or you're about to. If you haven't yet and want to know what it takes to do so, refer to [Trucking Life](#) for all the details on how to "git-er-done." If you've already read it, then some of this stuff will sound familiar to you.

What say we get this puppy cooking? Because we all know how tasty puppies can be...especially with some asparagus and a nice merlot. Right? Hello? Hello-ooooo?