

Choosing a trucking company: Discipline before all else

Most people want to be successful, they ask what it takes, want advice on what they are doing and desire to have the finer things in life: less pressure, more freedom, a return on their effort. However, not everyone is successful. Just as the rolling stones sang “You can’t always get what you want”.

When people ask what it takes to be successful they are often told many different things. In my line of work I probably get asked that question more than most. An answer can be given in many different ways: what specifically is this person doing wrong or what specific things can they change. It can become a very personal question, not just a general one. However, the answer for most is usually very similar. Most unsuccessful people are undisciplined. Successful people are usually very disciplined. Some people know they are (or aren’t) and some don’t.

Being a successful operator requires discipline, attention to details and forward planning. In the end there are no excuses that will hold to full scrutiny in light of discipline.

There are big choices and small choices every day. Each choice aids to success or detracts from it. Failure to choose (procrastination) is also a choice. Procrastination is one of the most costly choices people make. Procrastination is the arch enemy of discipline and success.

Successful operators do not have to be rocket scientists. Though I have met operators who are incredibly smart, it’s not a necessity for success. In fact sometimes their “brilliance” hinders their success. I’ve seen dull minds be much more successful than brighter. It may not seem fair; it may be offensive to some, but its reality.

Being an operator is about performing an acceptable level of service in a predictable, precise and structured format. Truck driving is highly repetitive work. Attention to details keeps the truck safe and the load on time.

There are many “smart” people who simply think too much. They operate assuming they possess too many exceptions, too many new plans, and new options. They seem to constantly chase some imaginary pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, trying to “hit it big” in the industry.

Please understand, there is no pot of gold, there are only pennies. The encouraging thing is there are lots of pennies. The discouraging thing (for some) is that each penny has to be consciously picked up... almost one at a time. It requires: discipline, patience, structure and a vigilant eye for the next penny.

There are many successful operators, every one focuses on the productive use of their time, consistently picking up each penny as it appears. Unfortunately not everyone enjoys the tedious nature of penny picking. Impatience, greed and shortcuts seduce a lot of people away from the discipline of making money.

Just the simple setting of the cruise is a reflection of an operator’s impatience, greed or arrogance. How aggressive an operator accelerates their truck to highway speed, navigate traffic and plan their day reflects their discipline to making or losing money.

Success is almost always the accumulation of a whole bunch of small decisions rather than the big ones. The hard working operator who pays attention to details will make each small decision count as a benefit.

Choosing a trucking company may be considered a “big decision” but will often times make little difference to the operator’s bottom line in comparison to the sum total of all the benefits or negative paybacks of the small choices.

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