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10 Ways to Increase Efficiency, Reduce Cost, and Improve Operations

For motor carriers: ten places worth comparing, the research behind each one, and a short list to check in your own operation.

Driver cost is not one number. It shows up in recruiting, waiting at docks, hunting for parking, dispatch, benefits, and every driver who leaves. Some of it is easy to see. Most of it is spread through the operation. Not all ten will fit every carrier; the useful question is which two or three fit yours.

#	Worth comparing
1	How fast applicants hear back
2	Referrals from your own drivers
3	Whether the job matches the ad
4	Customers that make drivers wait
5	Parking before the clock runs out
6	Dispatch and the coercion rule
7	Lanes and where drivers live
8	Employment costs at large-pool prices
9	The full 1099 vs. W-2 numbers
10	The cost of losing a driver

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What this covers



Faster response



Less waiting



Better parking



Stay legal



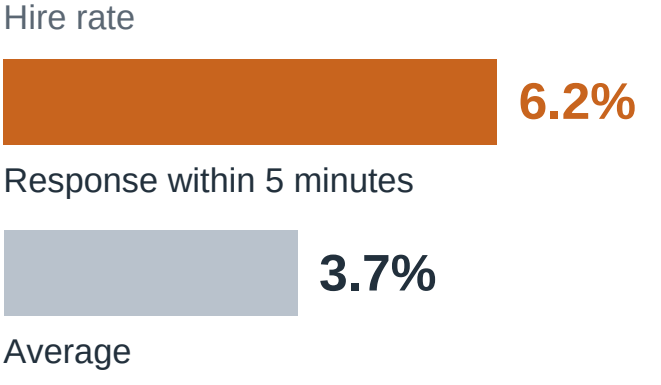
Count everything

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IDEA 1

How fast applicants hear back

Carriers that answer a driver application within 5 minutes hire at 6.2%, nearly double the 3.7% average.



Drivers apply to several carriers at once, and the first call usually gets the conversation. The same data shows hiring rates dropping by as much as half once the process runs past the usual 10 to 15 days.

Source: Tenstreet platform data, thousands of carriers and 1.5 million drivers through early 2025. Tenstreet sells recruiting software.

Worth checking in your operation:

- Time to first call, including nights and weekends
- Days from application to orientation
- Where applications sit waiting

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IDEA 2

Referrals from your own drivers

Drivers referred by another driver were 12 times more likely to be hired than the overall platform average.

A referred driver usually hears what the job is like from someone who does it. That ties to Idea 3.

Source: Tenstreet analysis of about 5,000 carriers, released June 4, 2026.

Worth checking in your operation:

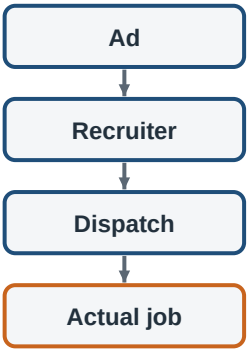
- Whether a referral program exists and drivers know about it
- How many hires came from referrals last year
- Whether the referral pays when the new driver stays, not just when he starts

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IDEA 3

Whether the job matches the ad

Accurate job previews reduce early quits modestly, and mostly because new hires see the company as honest.



The closer these match, the fewer surprises after hire. The finding comes from 52 studies of about 17,000 people across many industries, not trucking alone.

In 5,127 company-driver ads on Lanefinder, the advertised pay range spans a median **$400 a week**, and **one ad in three** does not say how many days the driver will be out.

Sources: Earnest, Allen and Landis, Personnel Psychology, 2011. Lanefinder job ads collected October 3, 2026.

Worth checking in your operation:

- Ad versus what the recruiter says
- Recruiter versus what dispatch expects
- Month one versus what was promised: pay, miles, home time, truck

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IDEA 4

Customers that make drivers wait

Drivers were held at 39% of stops in 2023. Fewer than half of detention bills were paid.



39% of stops

117-209 hours a year

+6.2% crash rate

per extra 15 minutes at the dock

The crash figure comes from a federal audit of time spent at facilities. Detained drivers also drive faster afterward to make up time. Fewer than 2 in 100 of the job ads we collected mention detention at all.

Sources: ATRI, 2024. U.S. DOT Office of Inspector General, 2018. Lanefinder job ads, October 3, 2026.

Worth checking in your operation:

- Which customers hold trucks the longest
- Revenue per driver hour on that freight once the wait is counted
- Detention billed versus detention collected

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IDEA 5

Parking before the clock runs out

Drivers lose close to an hour a day looking for parking, much of it between 4 p.m. and midnight.



56 min/day

about 9,300 lost revenue miles a year

Many stop early rather than risk finding nothing later, giving up legal drive time. The researchers pointed to more flexible appointment times as one way to run off-peak.

Source: ATRI truck parking diary study, about 600 drivers over two weeks, 2016.

Worth checking in your operation:

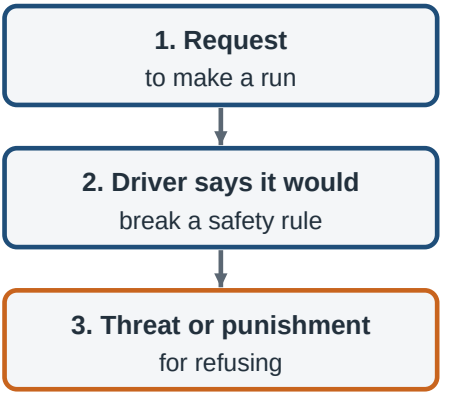
- Where drivers shut down early because of parking
- Which lanes have known safe places to stop
- Whether any appointments could move off the evening rush

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IDEA 6

Dispatch and the coercion rule

Federal law bars carriers, shippers, receivers and brokers from pressuring a driver to break safety rules.



All three together can meet the federal definition of coercion.

Punishment includes taking away work, loads, or pay. A driver who says *"I can't legally make that run"* may be protecting himself and the company; some disputes that look like attitude are really compliance.

Sources: 49 CFR 390.6. FMCSA, Prohibited Coercion of CMV Drivers (FAQ).

Worth checking in your operation:

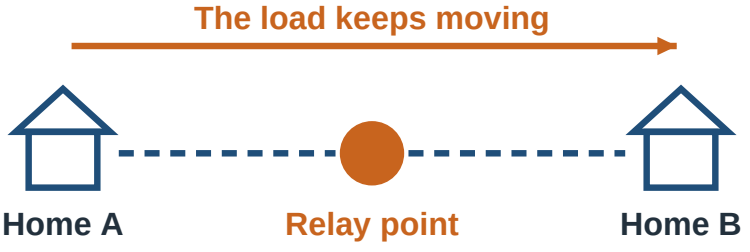
- Whether dispatchers know where normal pressure ends and coercion begins
- How many disputes involve hours of service, fatigue, or equipment
- Whether any driver was penalized for refusing a run he believed was illegal

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IDEA 7

Lanes and where drivers live

Time away from home is one of the main reasons truckload drivers leave. Lane design can change it.



Each driver turns back toward home.

Researchers have modeled relay networks as a way to reduce time away from home, but much of the work is simulation or network modeling rather than field results from operating fleets. In our Lanefinder data, one company-driver job in three is home daily; 13% promise no weekends home.

Sources: Vergara and Root, Transportation Research Part E, 2013. Transportation Science, 2017. Lanefinder job ads, October 3, 2026.

Worth checking in your operation:

- Lanes that repeat often enough for a hand-off, and where drivers live compared to them
- Empty miles to and from current yards, fuel and shop

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IDEA 8

Employment costs at large-pool prices

Large employers generally offer broader benefit packages than small employers, and scale is one reason pricing and plan design can differ.

Dental care: **30%** of workers offered it at employers under 100, **70%** at 500+. Retirement: **59%** vs **90%** (BLS, 2025). Most states use experience rating, so an employer's unemployment-tax rate can rise when former workers draw benefits against its account. The formula varies by state (Massachusetts 2026: 0.94% to 14.37%).

A carrier buying benefits, payroll, workers' comp and related services on its own may pay different prices from a large employment pool. The only useful comparison is the actual quote.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employee Benefits, March 2025. Tax Foundation. Bloomberg Tax, 2026 Massachusetts rates.

Worth checking in your operation:

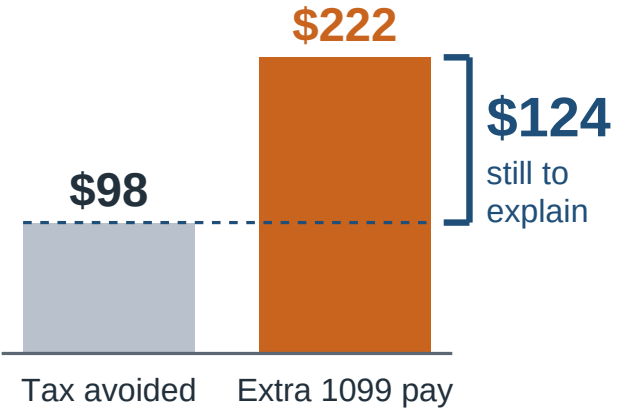
- Current cost of benefits, workers' comp, payroll and unemployment tax, against the same package quoted through a large pool

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IDEA 9

The full 1099 vs. W-2 numbers

A 1099 driver saves the carrier about $98 a week in payroll tax, but 1099-only carriers offer about $222 a week more.



Workers' comp, unemployment, benefits and administration decide the rest. At carriers that post the same job both ways, 81% offer the same pay either way.

Source: ProHRHQ, "Is 1099 Really Cheaper for Motor Carriers?" October 2026, based on 5,712 Lanefinder job ads.

Worth checking in your operation:

- Cash it takes to fill the seat each way
- What W-2 taxes, workers' comp, unemployment and benefits would really cost
- Every cost on one page

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IDEA 10

The cost of losing a driver

A study of 15 truckload carriers put the cost of one driver leaving at an average of $8,234 in 2000 dollars, with a range of $2,243 to $20,729.

- Ads
- + Recruiter time
- + Screening
- + Orientation
- + Idle truck
- + Lost utilization
- **= Replacement cost**

2000 study average: $8,234

Old study. Build your own number.

The number may look different once it is your own. Keeping one more driver can be worth more than another round of ads.

Source: Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, The Costs of Truckload Driver Turnover, 2000.

Worth checking in your operation:

- Drivers who left in the last 12 months
- Ads, recruiter time, screening, drug tests, orientation, travel and idle-truck days, added up
- That total divided by hires

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How much confidence should you put in each idea?

Confidence	Ideas
Strong	Detention, parking, coercion rule, benefit-access differences by employer size, unemployment-tax experience rating
Good, but source-limited	Applicant response speed, referrals (one recruiting platform’s data), realistic job previews (solid research, modest effect, mostly outside trucking)
Worth testing carrier by carrier	Relays, large-pool savings, specific advertising tactics, exact replacement cost

There may not be one big answer to driver cost. There may be several small ones that add up.

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Carrier Tools →

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