

Driver Experience Report 2026

What 1,100+ Drivers Told Us About
Tech, Pay, and Staying Power



INTRODUCTION

THE RETENTION CHALLENGE

The commercial trucking industry continues to operate under the looming threat of severe driver shortages in the years to come; the most recent predictions from the American Trucking Association estimate a shortfall of 160,000 drivers by 2030 if significant improvements aren't made.

At the same time, drivers in the workplace have been changing jobs quite often in recent years, causing "churn" and resulting in skyrocketing driver attrition rates. Losing one driver is estimated to cost up to \$12,799, including the costs of recruitment, benefits, training, scheduling, and other investments the fleet has made in each driver.

In response to these trends, fleets have been addressing high turnover rates on multiple fronts: increasing drivers' wages, offering better benefits, improving communication, marketing to underrepresented groups, and making pay more predictable in a volatile market. Still, the turnover rate has remained elevated over the last two years and is expected to continue so through 2025, potentially even worsening if the freight market enters an inflationary trend.

Did You Know?

160,000

Driver Shortage
Expected By 2030

\$12,799

Cost to Replace
One Driver

OUR APPROACH

1,100+

Respondents Across
Various Fleet Types

**Pay, Tech, Safety &
Communication**

Key Survey Focus Areas

As a technology provider partnering with the leading commercial fleets in the U.S., Platform Science has seen firsthand how challenging driver retention has become. Since Platform Science solutions are designed to improve the day-to-day driver experience through modern, connected technology, we believe the most valuable insights come directly from drivers themselves.

An anonymous survey offered a direct line to the driver perspective, creating space for candid feedback on pay, communication, safety, and technology. These insights help fleets and technology providers better understand what truly influences drivers' decisions to stay, leave, or recommend a fleet to others and how the industry can build a more stable, sustainable workforce.

Platform Science conducted a qualitative survey to understand driver experience across commercial trucking fleets. The survey was administered online to active commercial drivers through CDLLife, a publication connecting communities of truck drivers. Drivers were not required to answer every question in an effort to increase overall survey engagement. Drivers were incentivized through a gift card giveaway to random respondents. The Platform Science logo was made visible in the survey in an effort to provide transparency to both respondents and fleets.

More than 1,100 drivers participated in the survey, representing a broad cross-section of fleet types, operating models, and driving roles. This sample size provides 95% confidence at a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error, supporting statistically reliable insights. Survey responses were collected anonymously and aggregated for analysis. The resulting dataset establishes what we believe is the industry's first benchmark metrics designed to measure and track changes in driver experience over time within commercial trucking operations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The data reflects a predominantly experienced driver population, with most respondents (82%) over 50 and the majority identifying as male. This group brings high expectations for safety, reliability, and consistency, and they are quick to notice when those expectations are not met.

While competitive pay remains a key factor in attracting and retaining drivers, it is not enough on its own. Drivers consistently emphasized the importance of clear communication, keeping commitments around schedules and hours, and feeling informed rather than surprised. Trust, once broken, is difficult to rebuild and plays a significant role in long-term retention.

Technology also emerged as a critical differentiator. Drivers value tools that are intuitive, reliable, and designed to make their work easier. Streamlined workflows, well-maintained equipment, and clear communication with the back office all contribute to safer operations and a more positive day-to-day experience behind the wheel.

The takeaway for fleets is clear: investing in driver experience means looking beyond compensation alone. Fleets that prioritize transparency, involve drivers in decision-making, and choose technology that reduces friction are better positioned to build trust, improve safety, and retain experienced drivers in a highly competitive market.



IN DRIVERS' OWN WORDS

Before diving into the data, we wanted fleet leaders to hear directly from drivers, unfiltered and unedited. These quotes capture what matters most to the people behind the wheel.

What Must a Fleet Get Right?

The non-negotiables for long-term retention

"Communication is key for me!
Clarity in Communication.
Properly compensated for your
time and work ethics."

"Respect, honor work/home
balance."

"Do what they say and say what
they do."

"Keep me moving. I'm out here to
make money, not sit."

What Do You Wish You Knew About a Fleet Prior to Taking the Job There?

What drivers want to know before saying yes

"Turnover rate for drivers,
dispatchers, and management."

"More reviews from actual
drivers."

"How consistent freight would
be."

"How well they communicate with
the driver and what, if any, pay
raises you may receive and when."

IN DRIVER'S OWN WORDS

Drivers Demand Radical Transparency

Lack of clarity around pay and expectations erodes trust before drivers even start

"Transparency about compensation and miles."

"Real pay information, not how much is pay potential."

Broken Promises Drive Turnover

When recruiting commitments don't match reality, drivers leave - and tell others.

"It would be nice if companies followed through on commitments made during the interview process and treat all drivers fairly."

"How much their drivers really make on average versus the often inflated numbers from recruiters."

Drivers Want to Be Seen as People, Not Truck Numbers

Two-way communication and individual respect matter more than perks

"Communication level and being dealt with as an individual."

"Whether or not dispatch is pushy about accepting a load. Also, do the people working in dispatch see us as actual human beings or a truck number?"

Technology Can Be a Retention Tool or a Breaking Point

Drivers will tolerate tech that works; they'll quit over tech that doesn't

"...whatever tech they mandate needs to work correctly."

"All the bull crap technology that hinders driving more than helps."

"The truck should be in a good condition."

THE TECH FACTOR

The driver experience is increasingly shaped by technology, not as a secondary layer, but as a core part of the job. Drivers interact with fleet systems constantly: messaging, hours-of-service, inspections, navigation, workflows, training, and safety tools. As a result, technology has become a powerful factor in how drivers evaluate their day-to-day work—and ultimately their employer.

Our survey results reinforce this shift. 52% of respondents said technology influences their decision to stay with or leave a fleet. In other words, fleet technology is no longer simply an operational investment; it is also a retention lever.

Importantly, drivers do not have a single shared view of fleet technology. Respondents were nearly evenly split: 53% say technology makes the job harder, while 47% say it makes the job easier. That divide highlights a critical point for fleets: technology can either reduce friction and support drivers, or create an additional burden that erodes trust over time.

When drivers describe technology negatively, the themes are consistent: too many disconnected apps, unclear or inconsistent workflows, lack of transparency around safety tools, and systems that don't work reliably. When drivers describe technology positively, they point to the opposite: fewer logins, clear policies, reliable inspections and compliance workflows, and fast, two-way communication that helps them do their job.

The following breakdown illustrates the specific pain points drivers experience with poorly implemented technology and the corresponding solutions that can transform their daily experience. Understanding this contrast is essential for fleets looking to use technology as a competitive advantage in driver retention.



WHY TECHNOLOGY IS A TIPPING POINT

52%

of respondents say tech influences their decision to leave a fleet

Where Tech Fails Today

-  **Too Many Disconnected Apps**
Drivers are asked to juggle multiple logins and tools that don't talk to each other.
-  **Confusing Workflows**
Inconsistent or unclear processes make simple tasks take longer than they should.
-  **Unclear Camera Policies**
Lack of transparency around in-cab cameras creates discomfort and distrust.
-  **Unreliable Equipment Logs**
DVIRs and maintenance tools that don't work consistently add frustration and risk.
-  **Feels like Surveillance, Not Support**
When technology is complex or intrusive, drivers struggle to see its real-world value.

Where Tech Can Help

-  **Clear Pay and Policy Visibility**
Easy access to pay details and company policies sets expectations and builds trust.
-  **Simple, Two-Way Communication**
Messaging tools that connect drivers and back-office teams help resolve issues faster.
-  **Safety-First Workflows**
Reliable, connected DVIRs and compliance tools support safer operations with less effort.
-  **Simplified Daily Tasks**
Fewer logins, fewer taps, and smoother navigation keep drivers focused on the road.
-  **Reduced Cognitive Load**
When tools are intuitive and integrated, drivers can work more efficiently and accurately — and spend more time doing what they enjoy most: driving and earning.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR FLEETS

Build Trust and Transparency



Look for meaningful ways to strengthen communication between drivers and fleet leadership. Consider including both in-person touchpoints, such as regular roundtables or town halls, and digital options, such as anonymous feedback tools. The most important step is follow-through: acknowledge feedback, act where you can, and clearly communicate timelines when change will take longer. Even small moments of transparency can go a long way in building trust.

Drivers want to see action, not just lip service:

"The way they actually address my concerns [is important]."

Keep Your Promises



Clear expectations matter, especially when it comes to pay, schedules, and hours. When commitments are made, consistency is key. Missed expectations, even infrequent ones, can erode trust over time and impact morale. Fleets that are reliable and transparent in how they operate tend to foster stronger cultures and earn positive word-of-mouth among both current drivers and prospective hires.

Broken promises create lasting damages:

"That they were honest with hiring promisings!" [sic]

Choose Technology That Makes Drivers Lives Easier



When evaluating technology, prioritize solutions that simplify a driver's workflow rather than adding steps. Features such as single sign-on, fewer taps, pre-populated fields, drop-down menus, and customizable forms can save drivers (and your back office staff) meaningful time each day.

Reliability matters more than features:

"ELD reliability and equipment maintenance."

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR FLEETS



Give Drivers a Seat at the Table

Drivers bring valuable, real-world insight into what works and what doesn't. When introducing new procedures or evaluating technology, involve driver representatives early in the process. Ride-alongs and firsthand observations can help leadership better understand daily challenges and identify opportunities to remove friction. Choosing tools that can be configured to match your routes, compliance needs, and operating model helps drivers do their jobs safely and efficiently.

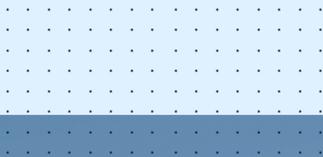
Drivers value input from people who've done the job:
"If the dispatcher was a previous driver for the company and if so how long?"



Focus on Integration

Strong integration across systems helps eliminate workarounds that frustrate drivers and slow them down. Look for technology providers whose tools work seamlessly together and whose partner applications are vetted for reliability. A smoother, more consistent experience reduces daily friction, improves job satisfaction, and supports long-term retention.

Fragmented tech creates unnecessary burden:
"After 52 years on the road technology has screwed the industry!!!"



CONCLUSION

With these survey results, Platform Science and fleets can now establish a baseline set of driver experience metrics for ongoing comparison. Positive action in these areas should lead to improved attitudes toward technology and transparency within fleets. Over time, these changes should also affect the industry's turnover rates, as drivers feel greater job satisfaction within their fleets and a stronger incentive to stay where tools make their jobs more efficient and safer, and where their opinions are heard and valued.

When fleets get it right, drivers notice:

What do you wish you knew about a company before taking the job?

"Nothing, I had a very good job, communication, and compensation. New equipment [sic]. Maintenance was excellent. Any and all concerns were addressed immediately."

STAY CONNECTED

LinkedIn



 Our Website



MEET PLATFORM SCIENCE

Platform Science delivers a modern enterprise fleet management and telematics platform with easy-to-use applications and round-the-clock customer service to ensure your drivers get the desired experience. From embedded OEM hardware options and dedicated support teams to integrated partner applications and a seamless driver interface, we have what you need to fuel your fleet's success.

Step into the future of trucking with Platform Science by clicking [here](#) or calling 844-475-8724.