

Pay/Compensation, Trust, and Work Issues

Three Best Opportunities for Carriers

Stay Metrics, a leading provider of driver retention tools for motor carriers, has taken an innovative look at the voice of the driver with the Stay Index™.

The Stay Index™ combines the results of more than 15,000 Annual Driver Satisfaction surveys completed between June 1, 2018, and May 31, 2019. It identifies areas drivers think need improvement, as well as whether they are related to drivers' commitment to staying with their 67 carriers.

For a more detailed description of how the Stay Index is calculated, see page 4 of this report.

The 20 top questions on the Stay Index™ are the key areas of opportunity for carriers to improve. Drivers are less satisfied in these areas overall, and these questions matter more to the drivers' commitment to staying at their carriers.

Driver retention was rated last fall as the third biggest issue in the trucking industry according to the [American Transportation Research Institute Top Industry Issues survey](#). The Stay Index™ is one more tool Stay Metrics provides to help the industry meet this challenge.

Top 20 Stay Index™ Questions for Annual Driver Satisfaction Survey

Responses from June 1, 2018 - May 31, 2019

Question Content	Avg. Score Rank	Correlation Rank	Stay Index™
My compensation is fair for the amount of work I do.	106	99	205 (1)
This carrier has my best interests in mind.	87	115	202 (2)
This carrier's compensation for wait-time is satisfactory.	108	85	193 (3)
I trust this carrier to look out for me.	82	110	192 (4)
I am satisfied with the compensation I receive from this carrier.	84	106	190 (5)
I am underpaid compared to other drivers with my experience.	109	81	190 (6)
I am satisfied with this carrier's accessorial compensation.	90	98	188 (7)
My carrier always does what it says it will do.	83	103	186 (8)
This carrier cares about my success.	70	114	184 (9)
My compensation adequately supports my family.	92	80	172 (10)
My carrier honors its promises.	66	104	170 (11)
Overall, I am satisfied with the level of work-related stress at this carrier.	99	71	170 (12)
I have faith in the leadership of this carrier.	61	108	169 (13)
This carrier communicates with me well.	64	105	169 (14)
My carrier is consistent in its actions.	65	100	165 (15)
My family wants me to change to a different profession.	98	67	165 (16)
This job gives me the chance to be respected in the community.	102	62	164 (17)
I have opportunities to learn on the job.	72	91	163 (18)
I am satisfied with the number of miles I typically drive per week.	75	83	158 (19)
My job puts strain on my personal/family life.	113	45	158 (20)

Legend

- Pay/Compensation
- Trust
- Work Issues

Source: Stay Metrics Database (2019), Annual Survey Responses 6/1/18-5/31/19. Drivers = 15,709. Carriers = 67.

Average score rank starts with the highest scoring question (rank 1) and ends with lowest scoring (128)

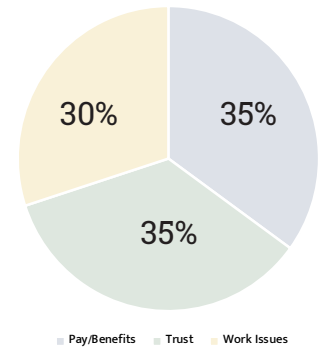
Correlation rank was determined by correlating each question to an average score for six questions we have found relate to turnover, such as "In the last six months I have considered leaving this carrier," "I would feel guilty if I quit this carrier," and "I would like to drive for this carrier for the rest of my career." Correlations are rank ordered so that the highest correlation is the highest rank (128) and lowest correlation is lowest rank (1).

What Did We Learn?

Priorities

The Stay Metrics Annual Driver Satisfaction Survey contains 128 questions. In this report, we examine the Stay Index™ top 20 questions, which are calculated by combining drivers' degree of agreement (or disagreement) with each statement and the question's correlation to a composite of six questions related to driver turnover (e.g. "In the last six months, I have considered leaving this carrier.")

The 20 questions with the highest Stay Index™ can be viewed as the highest priorities for improvement across the industry. These questions have lower scores and higher correlations to drivers' intent to leave. **They present the biggest opportunities for improvement.**



When we analyze the top 20 Stay Index™ items, three distinct themes come forward: **Pay/Compensation (seven questions)**, **Trust (seven questions)**, and **Work Issues (six questions)**.

Pay/Compensation

With seven of the top 20 questions, including the one with the highest Stay Index™, pay seems to be a big area for improvement. While we acknowledge that market forces make pay rates difficult to improve, our report adds additional nuance that can help.

Pay encompasses more than just the rate per mile, the miles driven, or even the percent of load. Drivers clearly suggest that there are opportunities to improve wait-time pay and accessorial compensation. These areas rank even higher than the number of miles driven on the Stay Index™.

Further still, the number one item, "My compensation is fair for the amount of work I do," states a challenge that the industry as a whole will need to continue to address. Being a driver is hard work, and drivers are suggesting that the compensation is not fair compared to the amount of work.

Trust

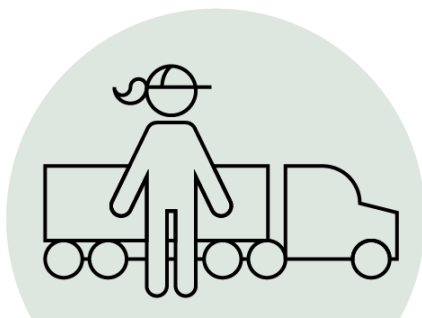
Another seven of the top 20 items, including four of the top 10, dealt with Trust. These questions cover a range of concerns from the driver's perception of whether "the carrier cares about him/her" to assessments of whether "the carrier does what it says it will do", "honors its promises" and "is consistent."

The results suggest a significant opportunity to improve (or, perhaps, restore) the trust between drivers and their carriers. Because trust is created between people, this opportunity is really about improving the relationships between drivers and the team serving drivers at a carrier. While trust-building may be difficult, it does not necessarily require any adjustments in compensation.

Work Issues

Lastly, a theme of Work Issues emerged (six of the top 20 items). The top item in this area was: "Overall, I am satisfied with the level of work-related stress at this carrier." Every job has a certain amount of stress, of course, and trucking is no different. However, the combination of driver dissatisfaction with stress levels AND its correlation to the turnover questions make them an obvious place for attention. This same is true of questions about "carrier communication" and "opportunities to learn."

In this area, two questions about work-life balance also emerge - family interest in the driver changing professions (not just jobs) and that the job strains the driver's personal family life. Drivers are telling us that their jobs make family life challenging, so how can carriers find creative ways to alleviate this strain, even if eliminating it is not possible?





What Can Be Done?

The Stay Index is a tool to help the transportation industry identify opportunities for improvement from the drivers' perspective. Some areas, such as equipment, while important to drivers, scored sufficiently well that they didn't emerge as an industry-wide trend. (Although for an individual carrier the priorities might be different).

Our takeaways from the report:

1. Carriers need to pay close attention to driver compensation

While 2018 brought pay increases for many drivers; not all shared equally. Carriers that fall behind in pay will continue to have retention challenges. The question of the **fairness** of driver compensation for the amount of work needs to remain at the forefront of discussions. If further changes to pay amount are challenging, can the industry find ways to restructure the job and lessen the workload?

Specific pay concerns, particularly wait time (detention pay) and various types of accessorial pay, represent an opportunity for carriers to think creatively. [NTI continues to report](#) on carriers thinking differently about pay structures – easing “lumpy pay” concerns, weekly minimums, and more. These strategies do not necessarily mean “pay more.” Rather, they make pay more transparent and approachable for drivers. For an example of how this can work well, [see our recent case study](#) on Brady Trucking to learn their strategy for clarifying pay with drivers.

2. The good news about improvements in the area of Trust is that it solely depends on the actions of people working at carriers.

Carrier leadership can decide that improvements are necessary here and begin working on them independently of whether freight is “hot” or “slow.” Starting with the leadership team itself is a great strategy.

At Stay Metrics, we believe that creating a driver-centric culture can play a key role in driving strategic and operational decisions and tactics that will help restore driver trust. Increasingly, we see senior leadership teams focusing on culture and challenging operational leaders to execute these types of plans. Usher Transport is one such company. Learn about their approach by reading [our free case study](#).

A Note on Company Culture

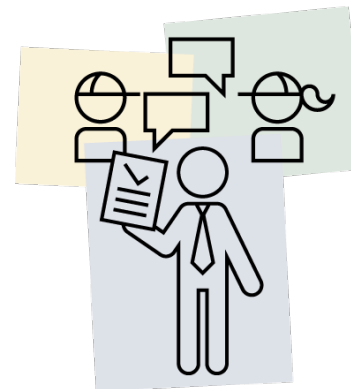
Stay Metrics offers many resources to help carriers examine what their culture is like and build strategies to improve. The [Stay Metrics blog](#) frequently covers this topic, and many of its [case studies](#) highlight how other carriers have done it.

Start by learning about situations where drivers believe their trust has been broken and then work to fix them. Consider adopting a core value of “we keep our promises.” Everyone from the CEO to accounting representatives to clients, and everyone in-between, should hold themselves to that standard. Drivers are clearly saying broken promises are related to turnover in important ways; companies ignore this area for improvement at their peril.

3. Find ways to help mitigate driver stress and/or help drivers strengthen their coping skills.

Drivers experience different stressors, which affect them in a wide variety of ways. However, that does not mean the industry can ignore the issue. Carriers should look at sources of stress and think creatively on how to solve for them – whether it is being able to schedule (and guarantee) home time for specific events, maintaining equipment and implementing maintenance schedules, or examining routes for parking, congestion, and wait-time challenges.

It appears certain that driver recruiting and driver retention will remain challenges throughout the trucking industry. The most innovative and, ultimately, most successful carriers will find new and creative ways to approach these challenges. The Stay Index™ highlights key areas of opportunity for improvement and leadership focus in an innovative way.



What is the Stay Index?™

Finding a budget for retention efforts can be a challenge. To ensure these funds are used efficiently, carriers often ask: How do we determine where the “next dollar” in retention should be spent?

To answer this question, Stay Metrics developed the Stay Index.™ The best way to understand how it works is to use an example.

Driver Survey

Let's imagine a 5 question survey:

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. I am satisfied with my route.	0	0	0	0	0
2. My equipment is well maintained.	0	0	0	0	0
3. I am satisfied with my pay.	0	0	0	0	0
4. I am satisfied with my dispatcher.	0	0	0	0	0
5. My orientation was satisfactory.	0	0	0	0	0

Responses are on a 5-point scale from “Strongly Disagree” (lowest) to “Strongly Agree” (highest).

Average Driver Score

The average of drivers' responses to each question reveals how satisfied they are with that area.

We make a table of these questions sorted from the lowest average score to the highest.

Area	Avg. Score	Ranking
Equipment	3.4	5
Pay	3.7	4
Orientation	3.8	3
Dispatcher	4.0	2
Route	4.1	1

We rank each area in reverse order. The lowest score gets a 5, and the highest score gets a 1.

Correlation to Turnover Intent

Next, we assess how strongly drivers' responses to each question relate to their intent to leave their carrier.

Let's imagine our survey also had the question: “In the last six months I have considered leaving this

carrier.” We want to see how closely responses to this question “correlate” to each of the five questions in our sample survey.

For example, if pay has a high correlation to the turnover intent question, drivers who were not satisfied with pay were more likely to have thought of leaving, and drivers who were satisfied with it were less likely to have thought of leaving.

The five questions are sorted from the highest correlation to lowest and ranked 5 to 1 like before.

Area	Correlation	Ranking
Pay	.82	5
Orientation	.74	4
Route	.65	3
Dispatcher	.58	2
Equipment	.41	1

Calculating The Stay Index™

To find the Stay Index™, add the rankings from the previous tables in a new column.

Area	Avg. Score Rank	Correlation Rank	Stay Index™
Pay	4	5	9
Orientation	3	4	7
Equipment	5	1	6
Dispatcher	2	2	4
Route	1	3	4

When we sort our table by the Stay Index,™ we find which areas this carrier should focus on to find the best return on investment. The highest possible Stay Index™ on this survey is 10 (twice the number of questions), and the lowest possible score is 2 (if both score and correlation had a 1 ranking).

In our example, this carrier should take a look both at their pay structure and orientation to improve the most in overall turnover.