



How Covid-19 Has Changed the Way Companies Recruit and Retain Frontline Workers

Even before the pandemic, logistics companies faced driver and warehouse labor shortages. When Covid arrived and accelerated the consumer shift to e-commerce, the demand for fast, reliable deliveries skyrocketed, exacerbating these shortages.

The increased emphasis on the direct-to-consumer model, which appears poised to continue after Covid subsides, has increased the pressure on logistics companies—and has driven home the value of their frontline workers who have ensured that goods arrive at homes and businesses throughout the pandemic. While many industries have adopted a remote work model during the pandemic, that's not an option for much of the supply chain.

"Nearly 75% of our employee base is essential," says Steve Sensing, President, Global Supply Chain Solutions, Ryder. "Meaning, they've got to come to work. That's not going to change anytime soon. If you move boxes or drive a truck, you've got to be there in order to effectively do your job."

The increased demand for these frontline workers along with escalating wages throughout the industry have created new challenges around recruiting and retaining employees. Here are three ways Ryder has answered those challenges:

A new approach to warehouse safety

Despite Covid-related challenges, employee turnover rates at Ryder's warehouses have

declined over the past year. Sensing says a major factor pushing them downward is the company's emphasis on safety.

"We've always been focused on protecting our employees from injuries or accidents," Sensing says. "Now, we are protecting them from things like Covid and the flu."

In Ryder-managed warehouses, this focus means supplying protective gear, taking worker temperatures daily and staggering shifts and breaks so employees aren't tempted to congregate during downtime. In areas where workers need to be closer than six feet apart, the company has installed plexiglass partitions.

Appealing to younger truck drivers

Ryder has appealed to millennial employees in recent years by creating a work environment that recognizes that their employment at Ryder is just one part of their life, but an important one that the company takes seriously. Management and leadership play an active role in developing employees by establishing goals and growth opportunities early on.

The average age of a driver is **46**, and more than **55%** are **45** or older.

Source: American Trucking Association

"We want to also provide competitive benefits, training and upward mobility for our employees, so they can move into a supervisory or management role," Sensing says.

Ryder's 800 shop locations also make it attractive to drivers who prefer to spend a day driving but sleep in their own bed. Rather than driving for weeks at a time, drivers can take a truck from one location to the next, drop it off for another driver and then drive another truck back to their shop, in order to sleep at home that evening.

Boosting tech—in tractors and in warehouses

Younger workers are more connected to technology than previous generations, and they expect a workplace that makes use of the most recent and efficient tech available.

Ryder has invested heavily in technology throughout the company, right down to its trucks and tractors, which now have much of the same technology, such as automatic transmissions and collision avoidance, found in cars.

The company has increased its tech capabilities in the warehouse, as well. Ryder OpsBox, the company's proprietary labor management tool, allows for improved labor planning and better visibility inside the warehouse to increase efficiency.

Competition for warehouse workers and truck drivers will likely remain intense due to the e-commerce acceleration that appears poised to continue even after Covid subsides. Companies that can attract and retain the best talent will have a competitive advantage over peers that struggle in this area.

"The best advocates for us are our employees," Sensing says. "The more that they go out and recruit people that they know, the better off we will all be."

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