



JOBS FOR LIFE

DRIVERS • THE DRIVER SHORTAGE IS NOT NEW BUT IS BECOMING CRITICAL. CHEMICAL EXPRESS HAS THOUGHT ABOUT WAYS TO KEEP ITS DRIVERS AND ATTRACT YOUNG ENTRANTS

FOR MANY YEARS the transport industry has been struggling with a shortage of truck drivers. According to research among small and medium-sized transport and logistics companies in several European countries, carried out by the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the commercial freight driver shortage increased from 23 per cent in 2019 to 36 per cent this year.

There are several reasons behind this difficult situation. The main one relates to a lack of generational change in professional

drivers: the average age of drivers is very high – in some countries over 50 – and younger generations are not being attracted to the profession. In the collective imagination there is a negative picture of the truck driver, living away from family and friends and spending almost all the day in a cramped space, with inadequate rest facilities and a resulting anti-social and unhealthy life.

Another problem for transport companies is the difficulty they have in retaining drivers. Constant monitoring of drivers by satellite communication, bad working conditions due to the lack of flexibility of time slots and the need to adapt sleep to rest hours, alongside pressure to get their freight to its destination as quickly as possible, can lead to job dissatisfaction and a consequent change of job.

KEEP THE DRIVER HAPPY

Chemical Express has engaged for many years, as part of company policy, to both retain qualified and professional drivers and to encourage young people to join the profession. Driver retention is based on three factors: training, recognition and flexibility.

Truck drivers represent the 'business card' of the transport company and, in turn, of its customers. For this reason, Chemical Express created a project for its drivers, 'Continuous Training', which covers the following topics:

- Behaviour-based safety (BBS) driving and loading/unloading
- Transport regulations
- Safety topics, such as the use of PPE and working at height
- Defensive driving, and
- ADR.

As a result of this programme, each driver can carry out their job in a very professional way. They are also trained on topics such as how to communicate problems; how to be polite with customers, operators and colleagues; how to be well dressed using all the PPE; how to be proactive with customers and be ready to help them; how to be very careful about potentially unsafe situations; and to always report near-miss incidents.

Drivers are also recognised for their length of service. Together with other benefits, specific incentives based on the number of years of work have been set up to encourage drivers to stay with the company for longer.

Drivers' needs are also taken into account in assigning the type of work they do. If they find it important to stay close to their family, they will be assigned to local operations, while if they are looking for a higher wage, they will be given international or long-distance jobs.

Another way to address the driver shortage problem is to encourage young people to take up the profession. Aside from the image problem, the cost of getting a heavy goods driving licence is high and can discourage new entrants. Chemical Express is planning to counter this with a project to approach young people, pay the cost of their training and licence and develop them with mentors from its own pool of experienced drivers, as long as they commit to stay with the company for a certain length of time. www.chemicalexpress.it



DRIVERS ARE THE LIFEblood OF THE TRANSPORT INDUSTRY AND NEED TO BE TREATED DECENTLY