



U.S. military veterans
are a perfect fit for
trucking companies.

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Seeking vets

An October report on CapitalPress.com cited an American Trucking Association (ATA) study in revealing that the U.S. trucking industry needs nearly 48,000 more drivers to meet current demand. It also warned that an improving economy is expected to balloon the shortage to nearly 74,000 drivers by the end of 2016. Moreover, the study projected that the shortage will reach 175,000 drivers by 2024 if nothing changes.

But an improving economy is good, right?

Well, yes. But if a shortage in truck drivers exists in the current economy, why would an enhanced economy do anything but exacerbate the issue if nothing is done to stall or reverse the shortage?

Journal of Commerce raised a sensible notion recently: "Unless trucking companies, logistics providers and shippers work together to finally resolve trucking's driver problem, transportation and logistics costs will rise substantially, and supply chains will be put at risk."

Estimating that 68.9 percent of U.S. freight tonnage is currently moved by truck, the aforementioned ATA report also explained that the industry will need to replace 89,000 drivers per year over the next decade – mostly due to retirement and industry growth. The possible answers to this equation were also listed: pay increases; lowering the long-haul driving age from 21; increasing at-home time for drivers; working to improve the overall image of drivers and the industry; and hiring more military veterans.

It's the last item on that list that perhaps strikes the most intriguing chord: hiring military veterans.

Indeed, the housing market is rebounding – and there's certainly room for optimism within Energy and Manufacturing/Distribution. It's a perfect time for trucking companies to turn their attention to military vets.

Fleet Owner recently did an article highlighting how many truck companies around the country have been looking to veterans to fill the driver shortage void. Why? Because it's a perfect fit. Companies are reporting that military veterans have built-in advantages when it comes to operating commercial vehicles and adapting to the truck-driver lifestyle – a

highly regimented, structured job that often requires some time away from home and puts the employee behind the wheel of serious machinery.

Bill McLennan, CEO of FASTPORT (a job-matching service for truckers), told *Fleet Owner* that veterans are familiar with those kinds of job parameters. "They're used to working around equipment that moves," he said. "They know how to train and be trained and the importance of staying current in their skill set. They're mission-oriented; they know how to achieve an objective; they work outside in all kinds of terrain and weather."

Interestingly enough, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), in October, awarded nearly \$2.3 million in grants (double the amount provided in 2014), to 13 technical and community colleges across the country to help train veterans and their families for jobs as commercial bus and truck drivers. The funding is provided through FMCSA's Commercial Motor Vehicle – Operator Safety Training (CMV-OST) grant program.

FMCSA awards CMV-OST grants to a variety of educational institutions that provide truck-driving training, including accredited public or private colleges, universities, vocational-technical schools, post-secondary educational institutions, truck driver training schools, associations and state and local governments – including federally recognized Native American tribal governments.

Similarly, SC&RA will continue its efforts to pull from the military veteran base of workers in this country (with approximately half a million unemployed and over 10 million not in the labor force) by facilitating the second Lift & Move USA event in Houston, Texas, on February 10, 2016 (hosted by TNT Crane & Rigging). ■

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