

Trucker Management: Chapter Summaries

Introduction

This book attempts to help you in your pursuit of entrepreneurial success by providing tools that can help you better manage your business at every level. They will help you organize and complete the daily tasks and look after the many small details that make the difference in your business operations and relationships, in a way that is not overbearing or all consuming of your time.

At the same time, these tools are also designed to aid you with the important strategic and long-term considerations of your business. They will enable the constant, systematic gathering of information and data you need to make better decisions for the long-term success of your enterprise, and then implement the results of those decisions into the operation of your business.

It is written with the already underway entrepreneur in mind – perhaps someone who has been operating their business for likely less than two years, and who recognizes the need for some new ideas or approaches to enable them to better deal with the challenges they face. You may be at the stage of growth where you are over-worked and under-staffed, but perhaps unsure about if you can afford to expand the business...or if you can afford not to.

This book will also offer some insight and ideas for the soon-to-be entrepreneur, such that learning about the tools offered herein may help you in your evaluation and planning of the time, information and other resources you will need to access when you finally do flip that window sign to open in your own business. Including these tools in the design of your business' management routines and procedures will help maximize the efficiency with which it operates, and enhance your ability to make proper business decisions, both of which will increase your chances of success....

What the Truck? How Truckers Can Help Small Business Owners

At first thought, truckers likely don't seem to be a profession whose tools and practices can comprehensively, let alone easily, meet the needs of a small business owner. Other jobs like salespeople and office managers may seem better suited to provide more direct and applicable aids for business owners, since small business owners are almost always performing those functions within their own business themselves.

But think about it some more. Truckers are professionals who on a daily basis accept huge responsibilities by being at the helm of a large, complex machine. Through busy, dangerous and hectic environments, filled with elements beyond their control, they are charged with moving that machine in a specified direction, towards an identified destination. With your business, you have accepted the responsibility of guiding your own entity, towards specific goals you have set, facing uncertainty and operating within and around factors over which you can have little or no direct control or influence....

Small Business Circle Check

In this section you will learn:

- What to monitor in your external (ie. outside) premises
- What to monitor in your virtual/online premises (website)
- What to look for in your internal (ie. inside) premises
- How to be exceptional in your business space and add value to your reputation and brand
- Specific Checklists tailored both to your type of business location and your type of industry

Before a trucker even begins his journey each day, he or she undertakes a detailed physical inspection of his rig to ensure that his machine is ready for the trip ahead. This review checks the safety features of the rig, ensuring that headlights and signal lights work, that tires are properly inflated, the brakes are functioning properly, and that everything is generally in working order.

An exceptional trucker, however, will also examine things beyond these basics when conducting his or her daily circle check, things that go beyond simply ensuring they reach their destination. He or she will examine the cleanliness of their rig, and ensure that the images or signage on the trailer are current, easy to read, and help market the company for which they are hauling. He will ensure that signs and straps are not left loose or dangling, and that the trailer is free of rust, chipped paint or torn signs – in other words, that the appearance of the rig contributes positively to the image and reputation of the company they are driving for.

Just as a trucker undergoes this daily physical inspection to ensure their rig is ready for their journey, you as a small business owner must also undertake a daily physical inspection to ensure your machine is ready for its journey on the highways of business. And, you also then have the chance to be exceptional in ensuring your premises add value to your reputation and image. The tools and checklists in this section will address both the basics for your business in terms of safety and regulations, but also include the exceptional elements of appearance, brand and reputation.

Small Business Dashboard

In this section you will learn:

- What aspects of your business are critical to monitor at all times
- Elements or factors to consider in examining aspects like your competition, your finances, your staff, and your network
- Specific tools and resources to help make this monitoring as efficient and routine as possible

Once you have completed that all-important, regular review of your physical premises to ensure your “rig” is road worthy, you will be ready to embark on your day’s journey. Just like a trucker faces the challenges of moving through traffic, meeting deadlines, finding alternate routes and reacting to the actions of others on the road, as a small business owner you must continually deal with changing environments and react to things beyond your control, all while attempting to continue towards your pre-determined destination.

In order for a trucker to safely deliver his cargo, he must rely on and process information from a number of different instruments, gauges, indicators and vantage points that continually give him current information about the performance of his complex machine, the actions of others, changes in the road ahead, and when he will need to take action to address dwindling resources (ie. running out of fuel) or overloaded mechanisms (ie. an overheated engine). Based on this constant barrage of information, a trucker is then able to make informed decisions about actions to take to best reach his destination. He can decide when to pull off the road to have service work done on his rig (either preventative or reactive maintenance), when to alter his route to avoid traffic jams and other impediments to his progress, and when to speed up or slow down the speed at which he or she is traveling.

Imagine trying to drive a transport truck without a dashboard and the information it contains? You would essentially be driving blind, and be forced to make decisions without *any* idea if they are the right actions to take. You wouldn't know when you were about to run out of fuel, when you were about to overheat, what traffic conditions may be like up ahead, or how fast you were going related to what speed the rules allow you to travel. Never would you agree to drive a transport, or even your own passenger vehicle, without a proper dashboard and its ongoing, necessary information.

So, why would you ever drive blind in your small business without the same information?

What we offer in this section of the book are our suggestions for all of the things your own small business “dashboard” needs to include. We'll tell you what systems and information you need to have in place in order to properly read the various aspects of your operation and make timely, well-informed decisions. And, we'll provide you with a number of ready-to-use tools and resources that you can implement immediately into your business to build your own dashboard.

Keys in the ignition – *firing up the engine*

Roadmap – *a plan to get where you're headed & identifying alternate routes*

CB/Dispatch – *direct information & assistance*

AM/FM Radio – *external news & information*

Logbook – *record of where you've been*

Rearview mirror – *what's coming up behind you*

Speedometer – *how fast are you moving, & against benchmarks*

Fuel Gauge – *how far can you go with the resources you have*

Battery Power – *what contingencies are available to you*

Trip Meter – *how long have you been on this particular journey*

Odometer – *how far you've come since the start*

Air Vents – *rejuvenation & refreshment*

Heat & Air Conditioning – *customize your environment*

Cruise Control – *leave the routine tasks to others*

Small Business Mechanics

In this section you will learn:

- The two steps involved with successfully implementing change in your business
- Ideas and suggestions that will help increase your ability to change direction, speed up or slow down in your business

So far, in using Trucker Management to help you drive your small business towards success, we have offered ideas and tools that will help ensure firstly that you are prepared to do business each day, and then that you have access to all the information you need while operating. The final step, then, is having the ability to take action and implement changes once your preparations and information causes you to decide to do so.