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Recruitment & retention techniques:

Dan Baker teaches "people treatment"

DEB QUAILLÉ

His enthusiasm is infectious, even through a telephone line from Bulverde, Texas.

"I love Canada. You know, you Canadians are like Texans with a health care plan and without a gun," Dan Baker says, his smile coming though loud and clear.

Baker, who has blazed a long trail on the road as a speaker, is also a nationally known teacher and consultant to the trucking industry, offering his knowledge at driver safety meetings, award dinners, conventions, and in-company seminars and symposiums. He travels extensively throughout the US and Canada, working with over 300 trucking companies.

Baker, who rises about 4:45am each morning to meditate and then work out on his treadmill ("I just worry about my drivers so much; they're so sedentary. Very few of them take care of themselves," he confesses) notes, "My meditation is very important to me. You've got to manage your

own thinking - manage your own thinking process. It's the things you don't see about yourself that bite you in the butt. I spent a lot of time in seminar work telling people to 'be in charge of your own thinking and be comfortable with yourself'."

But Baker is really in the "people business."

"I started as a Methodist preacher. I thought I had the gift of gab and when I got out of the ministry in 1969 I bounced around from job to job... Even in the early '70s people called me up and asked me to speak - tell a few jokes and 'waltz them to the river.' I really try to tell a lot of stories and have a lot of fun. Every joke I tell serves the message."

His message is the people side of trucking. Audiences who attend his presentations praise him as being full of fun, full of jokes, and a great storyteller, all centred on the basic theme that if you're in trucking today, first

you're in the people business and second you're in the trucking business.

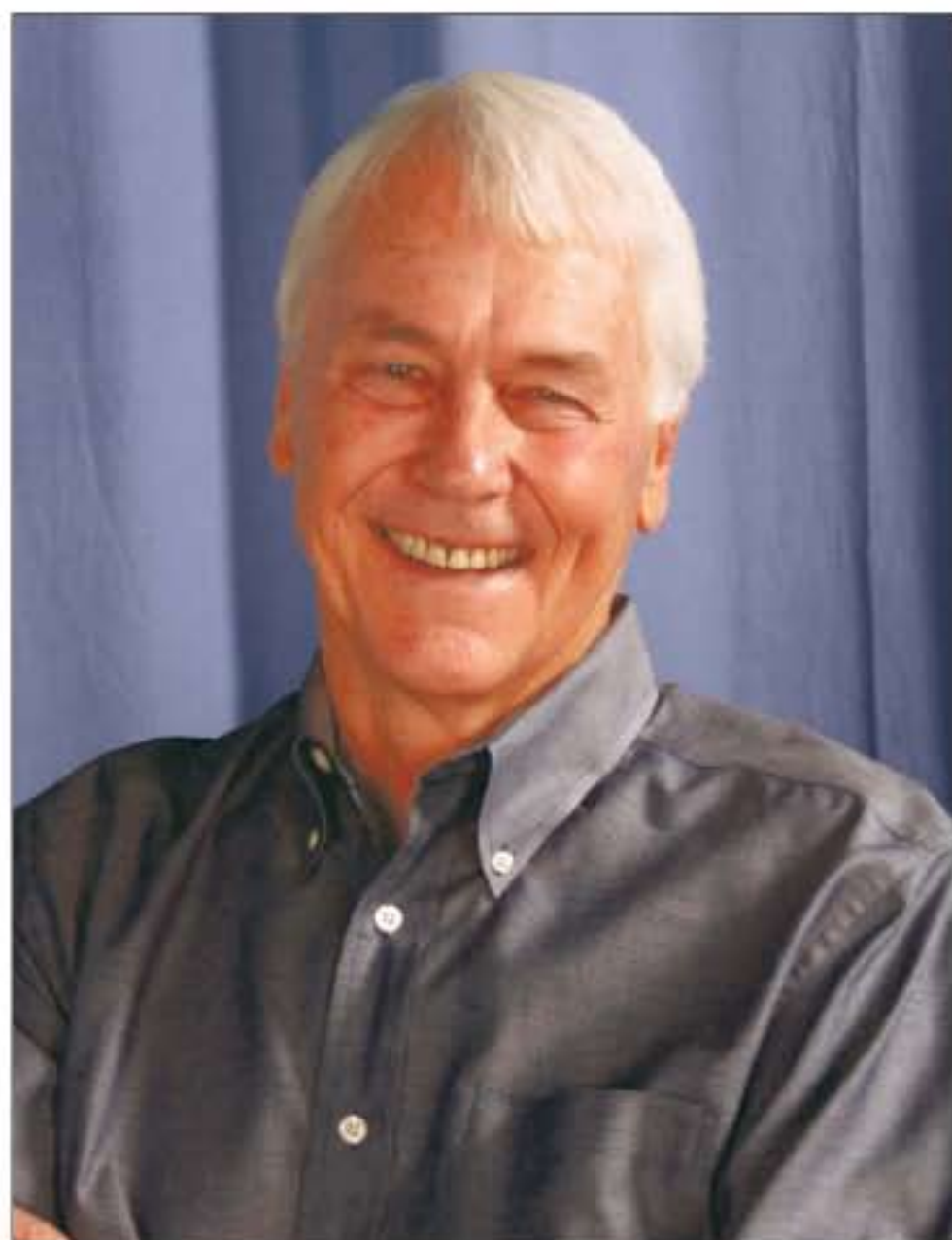
"My job in trucking is that I walk the people side of the street. Not as a driver, as a consultant, speaker, trainer - I work with the people who work with the drivers. Consequently I know a lot about trucking. My interest lies in what's going on in the driver's head.

"There are three basic priorities in trucking: The customer, the company who owns it all and the drivers. The customer wants his load picked up on time, hauled damage free and delivered on time. The company's priority is to increase revenue, control costs. The driver's priorities are to get me rolling, get me paid, and get me home.

"Those three things are always in conflict in trucking."

Another aspect on which he focuses is the dual work environment.

"The driver lives outside the wall, but every-



Dan Baker, the man on the people's side of trucking insists recruiting and retention is "all about the driver." Baker spreads a grass-roots understanding of trucking among people who interact with the industry.

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body else is inside - office people, dispatchers, safety people, accounting, HR, IT, shop. The driver has a lot of time alone on his hands - inside they don't have any time. That is another source of conflict too. So to deal with those two sources of conflict you must focus

on your one priority: Your customer pays your wages. But the driver is the only function that creates the revenue that feeds the rest of us. If you live inside the wall your mandate is to get 'em rolling, get 'em paid and get 'em home. With as

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Dan Baker teaches "people treatment"

little downtime as possible, with as few problems as possible."

Let's face it: Driving is not always a fun job. Drivers are often alone and far from home.

"Years ago drivers - the old mossbacks, as we call them - were gentlemen, well mannered, polite. Today with the Gen X and Y you've got a new kind of driver and it's not about what they can give to the company, but what they can get.

"[Another] big problem is driver turnover. Some of the companies have 100 per cent driver turnover; one big company I work with has 136 per cent turnover! A lot of Canadian companies don't have that much, but the American Trucking Association says that to lose a driver in 90 days or

less costs from \$5,200 to \$8,200. So of course we have a recruitment and retention conference - we need to work on those numbers!"

The tricky part, Baker says, is to entice drivers to stay with a company.

"We fouled the water - there's so many people trying to recruit drivers today - we recruit by trying to entice them to work for us... [Some] recruiters have the reputation of being liars.

"The problem is we are recruiting people we wouldn't have hired 10 years ago. Beside the recruiting process, there's the processing process. How do you make sure you're not getting drug dealers, drug abusers, whoever?"

People don't remember what you say, people

remember how you make them feel, he adds. After having drivers go through six different doors in a new company - from initially looking at a company's advertising to recruiting, processing, orientation, driver training and dispatching - by the time he meets the dispatcher his perception has been changed four or five times.

"So they come on board and we lose most of them right up front. We've already spent a ton of money to get them, and they spent a lot of time, bless their hearts, trying to fit and they don't stay..."

"We might have said everything right and spent all this money, put him in a \$200,000 truck, but down the road he doesn't feel good and hates our guts!"

Baker believes the companies that are suc-

cessful in the future are companies that can find good drivers and keep them. It shouldn't be a promotion process, but a process of attraction, wherein people skills are honed to the point that drivers hear about the firm and line up at the door looking for a good working environment. And although there are some companies like that, they're hard to find.

"[These are] all basic principles of dealing with people so they respond to you as you want. It goes back to the old golden rule: If you be nice to people they'll be nice to you. And if you keep on being nice to them they will be nicer too. If a company can recalibrate itself to that it will work."

For further information on recruiting and retention, Dan Baker has created a six DVD set entitled *Gett'm Rolling, Gett'm*



Dan Baker's new six-DVD recruiting and retention seminar, *Gett'm Rolling, Gett'm Paid, Gett'm Home: It's All About the Driver*, is, he likes to joke, "designed by a 70-year-old man to get something out there to get people interested in their drivers!"

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Paid, Gett'm Home: It's All About the Driver. The frank, lively instructional program includes a facilitator's manual for company presenters.

"It's for people who deal with the drivers, big or

small," he says, "designed by a 70-year-old man to get something out there to get people interested in their drivers!"

Visit www.danbakertexas.com or call 800-460-3288 for details.