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Truck Driver Safety – Behavior Plays a Vital Role

Hiring the wrong truck drivers can be disastrous. Hiring the right ones can save lives.

Naturally, safety training plays an important role in driver safety. Other factors may be even more significant according to a 1993 study conducted by Behavioral-Values Research Associates.

The research was conducted on maintenance workers between the ages of 22 and 64, who had been with (XYZ) Company for an average of 17.5 years. They were given four assessments that measured their behavioral style and attitudes, their knowledge of safety rules, and their pictorial and mechanical reasoning abilities. Interestingly, the study shows the only significant differences between the two groups of workers (injured vs. non-injured) were in their behavioral styles and attitudes/values.

The research validates that when companies implement a pre-hiring assessment selection system, four things happen. These companies:

- Reduce accidents
- Reduce worker's comp claims
- Reduce turnover
- Reduce maintenance costs.

G & P Trucking in Gaston, SC, has been assessing the behaviors of all driver applicants for seven years. G & P President, Clifton Parker says, "We are doing a better job during the hiring process. The behavior testing has given us insight on the applicants' true beliefs and actions rather than finding out later. The bottom line is that it has helped us lower accident cost."

Common sense tells us that truck drivers who are naturally careful and cautious are going to cause fewer accidents than those who are prone to experience "road rage." So, trucking companies would be wise to hire drivers with a "long fuse," people who are slow to anger.

The safest drivers are those who are steady and cautious by nature, and those who genuinely put others' well being above their own.

The BVRA research found workers with the best safety records are those who are high in the "S" and "C" behavioral styles and low in the "D" factor. They are also high in the Social value.

Let me explain.

In 1928, Harvard psychologist William Moulton Marston defined the four behavioral styles (DISC) we all have in varying degrees. Around the same time, psychologist Eduard Spranger published his studies of six values or attitudes that determine how we view the world and what's important to us.

Target Training International in Scottsdale, AZ, continued their research and produced the first computer-generated behavior and values assessments that companies use today to hire and manage the best employees. These are two of the assessments used in the BVRA research project.

The four behavioral styles are "D"-Dominant, "I"-Influencing, "S"-Steady, and "C"-Cautious.

Those high in the "D" factor want control, they are quick to anger, and become impatient easily. They are the ones most likely to experience "road rage" if they don't like the way someone else is driving.

Those high in the "I" behavioral factor are extroverted and people oriented; they talk a lot and like attention. The research found no significant difference in the "I" factor between the injured and non-injured workers.

People high in the "S" factor are steady and patient, they move slowly, and have a strong focus on their team's success. So we can see why those with a Core "S" style are more likely to be safe drivers.

Those high in the "C" factor are extremely cautious, pay attention to detail, and believe in following rules set by others.

So, it's understandable that truck drivers high in both the "S" and "C" factors, and low in the "D" style will have or cause fewer accidents.

It's also significant that research shows those high in the Social value are the safest workers because they selflessly put others' needs above their own.

One thing BVRA's research didn't show, which I believe is significant, is the ranking of those workers in the Individualistic Value. Even more than those with Core "D" behavioral styles, people high in this value are passionate about having power and control over situations and other people, so I believe it's important for trucking companies to hire drivers who are low in this attitude.

Simply put, the ideal driver – the one you want to hire – is one who is high in the "S" and "C" factors, low in the "D" factor, high in the Social value, and low in the Individualistic attitude.

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