

# THE ROCK SOLID NEWS

LITTLE ROCK FARM *Trucking*

MAY 2009

## Marks Message



**Pessimisms, Optimisms, Ideas and Changes where are you in your mind today with all that is going on?**

**This feature dabbles with trying to plan ahead for yourselves but it's that same planning that could be helping this recession keep its hold.**

**This feature will give you something to mull over in your mind and think about your own perspectives.**

**This feature is definitely a thinker!**

This month's theme (as picked by our fearless newsletter writer Michael Sellick,) is so important! Becoming an optimist versus pessimist will change absolutely everything about you!

**Optimist—A person disposed to take a favorable view of things.**

**Pessimist—A person who expects the worst**

### Setting Up The Scene

It's 7am, a sunny morning and two people are standing on their front porch enjoying the fresh morning air. One is an optimist, the other a pessimist. Next thing you know, Fred, the neighbor across the street is outside hollering like a fool kicking the living daylight out of his dog for peeing on his

fresh rose garden.

The optimist observes this outrage of horror stating, "My, it's a good thing Freddy is wearing sandals today instead of steel toed work boots!"

The pessimist observing the same scene, walks into his house returning later with a shotgun and hands it to Fred saying, "Your wasting your time Fred! You ain't never taught that dog nothin' cause you're a complete idiot! Us neighbors are sick and tired of watching you beat the dog everyday of its miserable life! Take this gun and use it on the dumb mutt or use it on yourself!"

My point is this! There has to be a happy medium! A true optimist doesn't close their eyes to reality, but rather recognizes areas of

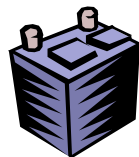
concern, comes up with corrective plan, then puts that plan into action expecting positive results.

A true pessimist always recognizes areas of concern, but never has a plan to fix it, and most times believes it can't be fixed...they think its hopeless!

What are you? What do you want to be? Don't get to the end of your life wishing you would have been somebody different.

Don't think you can make the change? If you are a full time Little Rock employee, be aware that our *Health Care Spending Account* can be used for professional consultation including both psychiatric and psychological. **Make the hard transition now!**

## Request From The Shop



John Reuber is requesting that drivers please check to ensure their lighting and accessories are turned off prior to leaving the yard.

There have been a number of trucks found with interior lighting, back up lights and accessories running in the trucks while parked here at the yard.

Items like running coolers,

floor lighting, bunk lighting etc., continually draining the batteries while drivers are at home.

It makes for a lousy start to a run to have to boost trucks before leaving. Some drivers are blaming poor batteries, but more often than not, the mechanics and washers are finding the lighting and accessories left on in the trucks.

## Thinker — Implementer — Both?

One of the most powerful keys to keep a business running smoothly is carrying through the energy during powerful motivational discussions. You know what I am talking about... when we sit around a room and talk about the problems and ideas to keep moving us into the future. It's the tasks that we are assigned and we can find more excuses on why we never do it. It's typical in business that we rely on others to make wishful thinking a reality, face it... ***Ideas and implementation can only happen if people rally and keep the momentum going. That's why deadlines have been created.***

People describe a business like a pipe that is open on both ends. The ideas, training, and energy fly into the one side of a pipe but on the other side where the ideas and creation should be falling out just as quickly are not because the output is weak and/or minimal. Somewhere in the middle of the pipe, the ideas and process lost it's motivation to see it through the pipe. Ideas may have hit a snag and the ideas may have fizzed out instead of seeing if there are other possibilities to get to the end result. We are creatures of habit and just go back to the old way, regardless of it working or not. Seems ridiculous when seeing it written here on the paper. We each know what we have procrastinated on and the ideas that we have put forth that lost force because in some cases it made us have to do extra research, extra planning, and working with other people to make the idea real. Some cases, it makes us have to push others to get their portions completed in order for you to keep going.

***So what are you... A Thinker? Implementer? Or Both? Do you talk the talk or walk the walk?***

There are times when it's others who are holding us back from us being able to do our jobs completely. When it comes down to sitting in front of the boss and they ask why something wasn't done. It's easy to point fingers but they may ask you, what did you do about it when you felt resistance to accomplishing what you had to get done? You may find yourself pedaling in your own swamp and wished you may have done things differently. Hindsight seems to be always 20-20.

## Ray Pennington's Thoughts

- Everybody's good for something, even if it's only to set a horrible example.
- A good scare teaches more than good advice.
- It we're bored with life, why do we want immortality?
- And then there's the cannibal who told his psychiatrist he was fed up with people.
- Men should stop trying to understand women, and just enjoy having them around.
- Many kids are spoiled because you can't spank a grandmother.
- Judges injure the good when they spare the bad.
- Maybe experience isn't worth what it costs, but you can't get it any cheaper.
- He who wait for something to turn up may find his toes do it first.
- Young man, if your girl friend's silly giggle sounds like heavenly music, your in love.
- A penny for the thoughts of some people is still a reasonable price.
- Middle age is when you swear off all your bad habits but still don't feel good.

## Footwear Policy

We are approaching the warm weather and it is tempting to wear sandals and crocs and /or footwear with open heels. These types of shoes provide safety hazards in our line of work. **This is your job environment and space, not a vacation.**

Though it's understandable that drivers wear comfortable footwear while driving the truck, fuel islands are notorious for diesel spills that can cause the cement to be slippery. It's not uncommon for fuel islands to be wet from truckers spraying off their trucks or using windshield washer fluids. Climbing up in the tractor or trailer requires solid footwear.

As per our company policy. **"Steel Toe Shoes or Boots must be within easy access of driver at any time, if not worn regularly".**

All employees must wear shoes outside of the truck that have no open heeled areas, are not sandals, crocs or footwear with no treads. These types of shoes can cause accidents or personal injury.

While on the customer's dock or at a farm loading a truck, you must follow the customer's warning signs. If it says to be wearing safety footwear at the entrances, you are to follow their procedure.

Wearing appropriate footwear includes our own facilities such as the shop. Pre-Tripping which requires opening the hoods, climbing and connecting trailer is also included in this.



## For The Record

For the record, a rumour has developed about Little Rock intentionally putting Live Haul Drivers on the sidelines as our drivers from Automotive or Highway are shifted over.

We are not sure how this rumour has started but can assure you that it is false. Everyone in Live Haul knows that the demands from the processing plants are not flexible. When in a crunch we are sometimes short drivers because our Live Haulers are out of hours or in the wrong place at the wrong time. We don't have options to say to the customer, **"Sorry about your luck, we can't do it!"**. We have a service to maintain.

Live Haulers usually have a steady week but sometimes we have to be flexible especially if driver's cannot work. We have to rely on our part time drivers to start the week off. When those drivers are not available, we may turn to someone else outside of regular live haul drivers in order to fill the gap.

For the record, only four drivers from outside the live haul department have been asked to fill in the gap from time to time. None of these drivers work for the live haul board all week. We have four drivers that are part timers who don't mind starting the work week on Saturdays but because they are part timers, they are not always available as they have regular jobs during the week.

### What does Little Rock do if a driver calls in sick last minute?

We start calling everyone who works in a specific driving pool first and then start calling everyone else to fill the gap.

You see, it's about covering for when we've run out of options. Not intentionally sidelining drivers.

## Michael — The Pessimist View

On page 4 and 5, Steve really drives home the point of seeing what the economy needs to do in order to change. His points of view are based on all the articles he reads. He says get out there and spend money and then we will see a difference happening. Realistically, I know he is right. The more we buy, the quicker the stores need to replace it on the shelf, thus creating a domino affect to the supplier, the shipper etc. to react in filling demand.

We are bombarded with television programs threatening this and threatening that. **"Save that money for a rainy day!" "If you are fired tomorrow, what will you do?" "Have you saved enough to hold you over?" "You need to get out there and spend... Spend... Spend!"**

### WHO DO YOU BELIEVE?

We should be taking the approach to redirect our money to where it counts the most and change our habits to ensure we have money for that rainy day too. That's because we are scared of tomorrow, even though we don't know what tomorrow will bring. Thoughts like this are running through people's minds.

Use this as an opportunity to clean up spending habits. In fact, you could enter everything into a money program so you can plan ahead. Sure... it sounds obsessive, but do we really believe that most of us know where our money goes? You'd be surprised how much pocket change is thrown into a cup of coffee each day through a drive thru window.

Businesses run on spreadsheets and close details to spending and budgeting. There's really no difference between home and running a business. If it can work for businesses it can work on a personal level too!

While budgeting and financial planning can sound like a detriment, this close tracking of money allows people to intentionally make better choices so they can spend money on more items and even more expensive purchases. It just may take longer than the entire population going on a shopping spree to change the economy!

## New Hours | Office Personnel



When attempting to reach office personnel by phone, listen carefully to their answering message should they not answer.

Some office staff have reduced hours. Their phone message machine will announce what days and hours of the week they can be reached.

If they are away, other internal employees will be glad to assist but keep in mind that each one of these employees have their specialties within Little Rock. You may need to wait for a day they are back in the office.

## Optimism Required For Changes Ahead — Steve McEntee

In the past 6 months or so we have seen more change to the economy and business political landscapes than most of us have seen in our life times. Sure there have been declines in the economy, but not quite like this down turn.

There is a new President in the United States, and a minority to boot! Same Prime Minister here in Canada, but now with a new agenda. Not to forget how many other new Presidents and Prime Ministers have changed world wide.

All these leaders are faced with the same daunting task. To change the attitude of the people and to instill some confidence in the economy. Changing people's attitude from doom and gloom to positive will result in the turnaround of the economy which will result in job creation. So what this boils down to is that people need to go out and buy stuff. However, people won't buy anything if they are afraid that they may be unemployed next month. This is a huge change that people are facing.



In the transportation industry we are facing huge changes also. In 2007, we didn't have enough equipment to cover the freight capacity, in 2008 we faced escalating fuel prices and insurance premiums. These increases far out weighed the revenues. In late 2008 the fuel prices started to lower; however so did the freight volume.

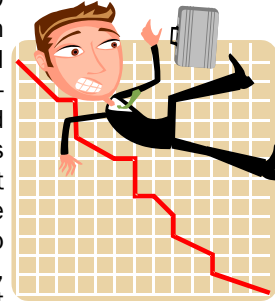
As freight becomes less available, rates drop like a rock. More trucks available to carry less shipments. Some carriers are willing to transport shipments dirt cheap, a lot of time at a loss just to move their trucks. Freight brokers know the situation and try to capitalize on the carrier's blight.

Quite a change from a few short years ago when we had more freight than trucks available to carry its freight capacity. It wasn't very often that a drivers was sitting in a truck stop waiting while we found them their next load. We were quite often trying to twist driver's arms for little time off between runs. Currently though, we have drivers off for 3—4—5— days and sometimes a full week waiting for something to develop. Even now, even if there is a trip, there is no profit being generated on the runs. We are filling our customer's needs or making work for a driver.

There has been a lot of changes in the cross border traffic. Implementation of the new rules and programs designed to enhance border security and supposedly sim-



plify the crossing while not deterring cross border commerce. Since the inception of NAFTA, there has been an average of 360 billion dollars annually worth crossing into the United States. That is almost 1 billion dollars every day and most of that portion is shipped through transport trucks. This past year the figures have dropped to approximately 200 billion, which is nearly half of what it used to be.



We are always hearing people say "THINGS CHANGE". Well they sure are right, things do change and change often. There is nothing wrong with change, sometimes we may not like the change but it all comes down to how we handle it. Change can be good, for example, June 1, 2009 marks the first day we have to have a valid Passport to travel out of Canada. We don't know yet what this will do for passengers in commercial vehicles, but likely a passport will be required. We will need



your passengers passport number and set them up into the ACE system to be allowed to be on board your truck. **It's a simple decision for US Customs — No Passport, NO ENTRY!** Like everything else, this is just another change we need to adjust to, it's not a bad thing. Can you really blame a country who has top security as priority one and wants to know as much information as they possibly can about every visitor in their jurisdiction. The Border Protection is increasing their staff by 2200 agents at the border this year. It works out to be 200 new agents for Canada/USA Border and 2000 for the Mexican/USA Border. This will make the border even more tightly secure.

The passport requirement will come eventually into Canada eventually in the next year or two. ACE currently is used traveling into the United States only, but will more than likely change so we carriers are using the same system going over the border no matter which direction we are heading.

As freight volumes decrease and freight rates drop, there will also be a decrease in the number of trucks on the road. This will lead to more MTO and DOT inspections. These agencies know that because of the economical down turn carriers will need to cut costs, even with maintenance. There

## Optimism Required... — Continued



could be more demand on drivers to perform and get their products to the customer asap. The inspectors are required to check a certain number of trucks each month. With fewer trucks, it's a greater chance that drivers may get more frequent inspections. Only a few years ago, you could drive days and never catch an inspection station open. Today, you can cross 4, 5 or even more per day. Drivers need to stay more on top of

their own paperwork than ever before.

There are a few ways we can improve our odds for avoiding a ticket. Simply — Professionalism. Being a professional driver includes driving safely. Don't speed. Being cautious of your surroundings at all times. Is there a car on your right side in your blind spot? Are you maybe going a little too fast when exiting onto a ramp?



Don't be constantly changing lanes, respect the other vehicles on the road. They all have the same privilege to be there — just like you do.

Is your log book complete and up to date? Did you do a proper inspection to your vehicle? Did you actually look underneath the truck or did you assume that nothing was broken and ready to fall off? Is the load secured in the trailer properly? Load securing bars set up to avoid product

from falling over? Are your chains done up properly with the clips securing the binders? All of these questions can increase your chances of a successful inspection grade.

When you have arrived at the shipper or receiver, are you presenting yourself in a professional manner or do you have those old fleece track pants on that are dirty, with ripped holes in the knees? Face it, people judge others based on appearance without even having to say one word, being presentable looking can change your experiences dramatically.



When going into a customer doorstep, you should always carry your own pen and extra pad of paper just in case it's required. It's one less thing you need to ask the receptionist for and it also makes you look better prepared for the job.

Little Rock receives calls all the time telling us we don't have enough paperwork to unload the truck. The driver has dropped in their package, been told to go wait in the truck for the unload. Time ticks away and eventually we are contacted that we don't have sufficient paperwork to be unloaded. Several hours can be

wasted before they make that call to us, even though the driver more than likely has paperwork left in their trucks. Poor organization on the driver's behalf and failure to submit all documents cause this type of grievance on a frequent basis.

I remember a long time ago when I started driving truck, (some in the office would harass me that it was a very L0000000000ONG time ago), drivers would be required to wear a uniform and lots of drivers were required to wear a tie. Almost all of us wore safety boots or shoes on a regular basis. We didn't have cell phones or satellites to distract us. NOW... wearing a necktie while driving can open up the possibility of the tie getting caught in the steering wheel and possibly choking you while making a turn. It has become a safety issue but in retrospect would have made for a great wiping cloth as you stuff your mouth with a BIG MAC while talking on the cell phone as you're driving. Not a great idea but happens a million times a day.

This is all part of doing the job in a professional manner. As this recession winds down and the economy starts to turn for the better, and it will, many carriers won't be around... however, the good ones will still be there and be strong. The carriers with the professional drivers and the carriers who do the job right and safely will be around. When we do something and we say "It's good enough". That is what it is, It's only "good enough". When are doing something we can say "That is our very best". Then it is "The very best." To strive for being the "very best" can only be positive. The companies that survive this recession will be the ones that are the very best.

This is quite the change from the way the industry has been operating for the past 30 years. Where freight out weighed the availabilities of drivers. Carriers had to hire any driver simply to cover the load. Carriers sponsored drivers from Europe and many other places because there wasn't enough workforce here to do it. This won't be the case in the future. Carriers will have the options to hire only the very best drivers. There will be a lot more drivers available then empty seats for the next few years. This is definitely a change from the past!

