



**Owner-Operator's Business
Association of Canada**

**Association professionnelle des
routiers autonomes du Canada**

*...from the
director's chair*

What Are We Waiting For?

Who the heck is this OBAC crowd and what are they up to? The name says it all: the Owner-Operator's Business Association of Canada. OBAC is out to help owner-operators do a better job of managing their businesses, with the ultimate objective being a more profitable owner-operator, and a work environment where both a decent income and job satisfaction are possible.

"Profitable owner-operator?" you say, "we'll never make a profit as long as the carriers keep jerking us around." Bad attitude. We need to get past that age-old labour/management mentality that has hamstrung the independent contractors in this country for years. There's little to be gained in bemoaning bad custom and practice that has crept into the carrier/owner-operator relationship, if we're not prepared to do something about it. We need a major overhaul of the driver/carrier/shipper relationship. There's never been a better time.

Take a good look at what's happening in the industry. With increased demand for trucking services and driver shortages squeezing capacity, there's never been a better opportunity to improve the rate structure. Owner-operators and drivers have a huge amount of clout.

There's plenty of evidence to suggest that shippers are willing to pay higher rates and accessorial charges; if they don't, they'll have a hard time moving their freight. We need to get more aggressive in going after our fair share of the increases. And a big part of that is doing a better job of showing carriers what our costs are, if we expect to be fairly compensated for the work we do.

The more enlightened carriers are starting to realize that in today's competitive environment, it's not the carrier with the customer who wins; it's the carrier with the drivers. With a stable workforce they're in a better position to serve the customers who are willing to pay for reliable, top-notch service.

There's a huge opportunity here for owner-ops to start building sustainable partnerships with their customers. Sharpen your business skills if you need to – OBAC is developing "best practices" products and services to help with that – and go to the table with your homework done.

We need to get savvy about costs, and learn how to build a competitive rate quote that makes the job workable and profitable. And let's make better use of the contract as a business tool. It's a deal between two parties, so it should protect and enhance our interests too. For example, there's no reason why we shouldn't incorporate fuel surcharge clauses into carrier/owner-operator contracts, rather than relying on shipper/carrier arrangements to offset fluctuating fuel costs.

So what's a good rate, anyway? Most owner-ops will tell you that they're not getting enough, but a goodly number of them can't tell you how much they really need.

In the grand scheme, we need to cover operating costs, pay ourselves a decent wage, and realize a profit for our efforts. Profit, after all, is why we're running a business in the first place. But there's more: it's high time everyone – carriers, shippers, and we, too – started putting a value on our time. All of the time and effort we spend generating revenue

**Joanne
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should be compensated.

And we should refuse to work with the so-called bad apples of trucking, the fly-by-nighters who earn their profits on the backs of truck drivers. As long as we continue to haul their freight around for less than it costs to operate the truck, we're helping them stay in business, and that makes it tough on the reputable carriers who have to compete with these outfits. So get on-side with the carriers who are interested in building sustainable business partnerships, and don't waste your time with those who won't.

And I know you're saying: "OK, maybe I can do it, but if the next driver through the door won't, what's the point?" And you're right; but I think we underestimate the impact of 40,000 individuals, all doing the right thing at the same time, especially with a national organization behind us for back-up and support, and to lend strength and credibility to our efforts.

That's the beauty of OBAC. It's providing the collective voice Canadian truckers have needed for a long time. Make it your association by supporting it with your ideas, your opinions, and your membership. The broader the representation, the more effective OBAC can be. And the more influence we have over our own operations, the better able we'll be to influence the way trucking does business.