Although driver recruitment and retention remains the critical issue for most motor carriers, nearly all fleets face a tight labor market for maintenance personnel. With the recent changes in engine technology, recruiting trained maintenance technicians has become a critical issue.

Several programs have recently been introduced to help fleets attract and train technicians and to aid in the retention of these valuable workers. One plan offered by ChevronTexaco Global Lubricants is designed to recognize workers already on the payroll as a way to improve retention and to help screen new recruits to ensure the best possible maintenance performance. The program recognizes the Delo Diesel Technician of the Month from among nominees submitted by employers. It is intended to help fleet maintenance programs attract and retain the best and brightest technicians in their area. The nomination form can be found on Chevron’s web site at chevron.com/prodserv/nafl/trucking/content/dieselawarddetails.htm. Completed nomination forms should be mailed to ChevronTexaco Diesel Technician, Program Coordinator, Young & Rubicam, 100 First St, San Francisco CA 94105 or faxed to 415-896-0533. Nominations can be submitted by email at dieseltech@sfo.yr.com.

Nominations for the ChevronTexaco program are screened by a group of automotive industry specialists, including in-house technicians from Chevron. The committee selects 10 finalists per month. Each finalist must have had at least two nominations—one from their management and a second from a co-worker or customer. These finalists are required to take the Scheig Diesel Technician Test and achieve a satisfactory score to be considered further. Following testing, the committee selects a monthly winner. The award is limited to one technician per location per year. However, multiple company locations can be considered. For instance, Ryder Systems had two recent winners at different locations. The monthly winner is interviewed and used to promote the program in trade media and on the Chevron web site.

The winner for the month of April 2003 is David Gabrielle, an ASE master technician at Deluxe International Trucks in Hackensack, New Jersey. In addition to the recognition he receives within the Deluxe International organization, he will be awarded a plaque and a Diesel Technician of the Month jacket.

Chevron says that the award program raises the job status of recipients and that of their colleagues. It also sends a positive message to new technicians and to those considering a career as a diesel mechanic.

In addition, the employer of the technician of the month receives a $2,000 award for use toward vocational school training for new employees or additional training of veteran technicians. The program places no restriction on trade school selection. A good resource for selecting a school is provided by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence. A list of ASE-certified programs can be found at asecert.org. Alternatively, winning employers can use the $2,000 on the Scheig Hiring and Performance System to help screen applicants and retain qualified mechanics.

In addition to the monetary award, employers receive a complete two-volume set of lubrication reference manuals from The Maintenance Council. These guides contain a wide range of preventive maintenance and vehicle application topics.

Applicant screening tools
Marketed by Scheig Associates, the system is designed to evaluate applicant behavior and job performance. It has three phases—a pre-employment assessment based on applicant behavior, a structured interview, and performance evaluations. The system offers a thorough evaluation of individual candidates. In cooperation with Chevron, employers of technicians of the month are offered a 15% discount on the Scheig system.

The Scheig applicant screening process is based on research that top-performing workers are two to three times more productive than their merely average counterparts. That productivity differential has a direct impact on maintenance effectiveness. With the behavior-based pre-employment testing and the assistance of the structured interviews provided by the
program, users can expect to reduce the frustrations experienced during the hiring process and lower costs for screening and processing applicants. For many positions, the administrative cost of screening and hiring a single applicant can exceed $5,000.

Hiring the right candidates from the start will increase maintenance department productivity and reduce worker turnover, Scheig says. In terms of total fleet performance, this will improve company efficiency and increase the potential for profitable operation.

The Scheig Diesel Technician test used to evaluate Delo Diesel Technician of the Month candidates has three sections. The first part of the test has 94 questions to evaluate a technician’s experience and willingness to perform. The second section is a self-rating evaluation with 73 paired descriptions of tasks that the candidate is asked to choose between. Section three stresses diagnostic skills for critical incidents with 37 questions, each of which have four possible solutions to a given situation. The test scores each applicant in relation to others who have taken it. The baseline score is 50, and most candidates for the Chevron award have been nominated more than once and score above 60.

**Online technician training**

Other training exists online for fleets that do not have access to continuing education as a result of cost pressures, time, or job constraints. Training resources such as efleetmgmt inc exist to provide a series of management courses. When complete, the Transportation Management Training Series will have 35 online courses in equipment, maintenance, financial management, human resources, safety, logistics, and compliance. The initial group of 12 courses is already available at the company’s web site at efleetmgmt.com. These initial courses concentrate on budgeting, costing plans, security, and safety.

Online courses offer an alternative to community colleges or vocational schools for fleets that want to provide continuing education and still maintain budget discipline. The web-based training provides an opportunity to managers and technicians whose companies cannot spare the funds or manpower to offer off-site training.

The efleetmgmt courses have been developed in cooperation with leading industry experts including Dr Joe Hanna, associate professor of logistics at Auburn University; R Patrick White, former traffic and transportation manager at Coca-Cola USA, and principal in the consulting firm WhiteTrans Solutions; John Christman, compliance coordinator, Kodak Rochester Transportation, Eastman Kodak Company; James Gulick, director of transportation for Fresh Express; Rachel Urso, transportation compliance supervisor, United Stationers Supply; and Tom Sorensen, core technical services manager, and Tom Rosson, industrial engineer, both of Coors Brewing Company.

Hanna oversees the program and monitors course content. Students with scores of 80% or higher on exams receive a certificate of completion and credit for continuing education from Auburn University.

Each course requires about two hours for completion and testing. They include online discussion for exchange of ideas about course content and interaction with members of the advisory board. Course fees are $79.

For more information call 540-399-1010 or request information by email at info@efleetmgmt.com. In addition, a link to the educational system is available on the efleetmgmt web site.

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