

## Be a “Student” of the Industry

The Commercial Vehicle market offers many opportunities to learn, grow and develop. Maximizing these opportunities begins with immersing yourself in the industry. Today’s Commercial Vehicle market is changing at an ever-increasing rate. Macro changes such as vehicle electrification, consolidation, Private Equity acquisitions, E-Commerce, the Digital Transformation etc. are all having profound impacts on each market participant. Thus, being “in the know”, well connected, and open to new ideas has never been more critical. However, there is a consistent factor in the industry: the people. Do you have the “street cred” to be able to quickly pick up the phone and connect with the right person? Each week and each event throughout the year offers a choice to “learn more, know more”. I encourage you to look back at the most recent month - are you fully capitalizing on your opportunities by being “a student of the industry”?

What does it mean to be a student of the industry? Simply put, each interaction you have presents the opportunity to dig deeper and connect the dots in our industry.

Examples of becoming a “Student” of the industry:

When given a plant tour by an owner or executive at a company, engage, ask questions, and follow up questions. If their goal is a 15-minute tour, make it last 30 minutes. This is their “baby”, and you will stand out from others by demonstrating a true interest in what they’ve created. They will inevitably share important tips for being successful with their company. Their strategies and challenges are all important in developing how you can best foster a partnership with their company.

Do your homework—in advance. There is no excuse in today’s world to not research the individual and the company you are meeting with. Be armed with your research, which will be recognized and appreciated. I’m amazed weekly by the lack of preparation by many that I meet. Just last month I met with an executive who led with, “So, how many branches do you have?” A 10-second Google search from the parking lot would have allowed him to have a more compelling conversation—and a longer meeting.

While attending a convention, don’t be the guy responding to emails from your hotel room. Don’t hang with your buddies from the company you work with and see daily. These insular meetings offer no diversity of opinions or ideas. Instead,

choose to sit with a new group at the breakfasts and lunches. Attend all the seminars—even the ones “that do not apply to me” to maximize your connections and exposure to things that DO apply to your customers.

Associations are critical to success in today’s competitive world. Associations take on significant challenges that many companies cannot influence individually. Examples would be the Right to Repair Act (RTRA), education, data standards such as P.I.E.S. and ACES, etc. If you are not a member of at least one association, you are missing an opportunity to stay abreast of the most impactful changes. Once participating in the associations - volunteer. Some of the most beneficial relationships are spawned from mutual interest and willingness to volunteer your time and expertise. Join a task force. Join the board and attend the meetings! Our industry has numerous value-added associations such as MEMA, CVSN, TMC, HDMA, HDDA: research, reach out and participate.

Actively search out the opinion leaders in your profession. Learn what they stand for and what they are passionate about. Connect on the various platforms to begin the relationship. Most successful people can count on a few mentors that have helped them in large and small ways. Develop those relationships early and manage them to benefit both of you. Returning the favor is an important part of these relationships – be active.

Own your LinkedIn page. It is likely the most frequented site for someone looking to find out more about you. Is it up to date, complete and does it make a great first impression?

Read! Today’s industry offers dozens of ezines, newsfeeds etc. consumption of the relevant information takes minutes per day but keeps you in the know.

Take risks - Take on the hard assignments, geographies and challenges. In today’s environment, it is harder to be noticed. Being willing to take on the hardest assignments for a company – ensures you will be noticed. This could be projects you undertake, the move you are willing to make geographically. Are you willing to make the tough move? Increasingly, your competition for advancement are not....

Your industry choices are critical. Maximize your investment in your industry.

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