

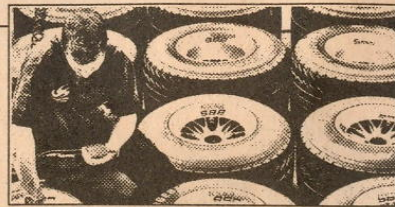
Companies now strain to put the drive into drivers

Bindu D Menon &
Hemamalini Venkatraman
CHENNAI

FORGET technology. Intensely driver-dependent sectors like logistics and infrastructure are finding attrition a major challenge. And though the auto industry is on a roll, a major chunk of this tribe is entering the 50-year age bracket, causing the demand-supply gap to widen.

No wonder then, driving institutes, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, welfare measures and health programmes are among the slew of initiatives that are being undertaken by corporates to keep drivers on the rolls.

While biggies like Maruti, Ashok Leyland and MRF have established driving schools and CSR programmes to monitor this vital resource, others like logistic majors DRS,



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- **Biggies like Maruti, Ashok Leyland and MRF have established driving schools and CSR programmes**
- **Like logistic majors DRS, PSTS and commercial vehicle major Eicher are fine-tuning training initiatives.**
- **DRS' school is set for official launch by September in Hyderabad**

It's Top Gear For Schools, CSR, Welfare Schemes To Retain Talent

PSTS and commercial vehicle major Eicher are fine-tuning training initiatives.

"Getting drivers is our biggest headache. Since ours is an industry which is extensively driver-reliant, we thought it is imperative to set up a driving school to meet the shortage," DRS Logistics chairman and managing director Dayanand Agarwal told ET.

The school is set for official launch by September in Hyderabad. With a fleet of 800 vehicles, DRS engages 1,600 drivers, whose average age is between 33 and 35 years, he added.

Six months ago, it launched a training programme at Toshani in Haryana. Around 100 drivers and supervisors have already been trained in two batches.

Of India's five million-plus truck driver

population, 40% come from north India, with Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan being the primary sourcing points. South accounts for 30%, concentrated more in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, he added.

PSTS Logistics is another company facing driver shortage. It has 600 employees and faces 20-22% attrition in the driver segment. "We have identified one of our staff to be our manpower recruit head so that he can do the additional function of recruiting drivers. This way, he is in employment and he also has the additional responsibility of meeting his business obligation," joint managing director Ganesh Ram told ET.

DRS joint managing director A K Agarwal cites schemes introduced like 'Khoob Chalao' and 'Khoob Kamao' for long-haul

drivers and the 'Budhape Ki Lathi' insurance cover even as the group targets the 6,000-driver mark by next March. A driver's monthly income of Rs 15,000 is also boosted by an additional km-based incentive scheme. Immigration service companies like WWICS are, meanwhile, luring drivers to greener pastures like Canada, Australia and the US, where there is an acute shortage of the required skill-sets.

Canada alone faces a shortage of around 25,000 truck drivers. Annual salaries are in the Canadian \$35,000 region for this category, says WWICS CMD B S Sandhu.

"Certainly there is a dearth of good drivers. Our institute fulfils some needs of the industry through training."

bindu.menon@timesgroup.com