

THE WORKHOUND REPORT

# UNCOVER A THRIVING FLEET WORKFORCE

WORKHOUND'S 2021 ANNUAL DRIVER FEEDBACK  
TRENDS ANALYSIS



- 2021 -

TAKE A DEEP DIVE INTO DRIVERS' TOP  
PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS IN 2021,  
BASED ON HONEST AND CONTINUOUS,  
OPEN-ENDED FEEDBACK.

WorkHound's 2021 Annual Driver Feedback Trends report brings drivers' experiences and preferences to life. The report is based on more than 62,800 anonymous comments from more than 21,100 workers at 104 companies. Driver feedback was received anonymously in response to a text message asking how things were going at work. This feedback arrives weekly and is analyzed in real-time to help carriers determine the highest priorities to improve company-wide retention.

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**The driver shortage has reached an all-time high, and recruiting and retaining drivers is a top priority for fleets. Driving retention is dependent on fleets understanding what drivers need, what makes them happy or unhappy, and what makes them decide to switch carriers. More importantly, carriers need to know when and how to intervene to shore up critical issues before a driver quits.**

WorkHound’s 2021 trends report highlights the importance of employee outreach, equipment equity, and relationships within an organization. Current and past reports show communication ties into every subject.

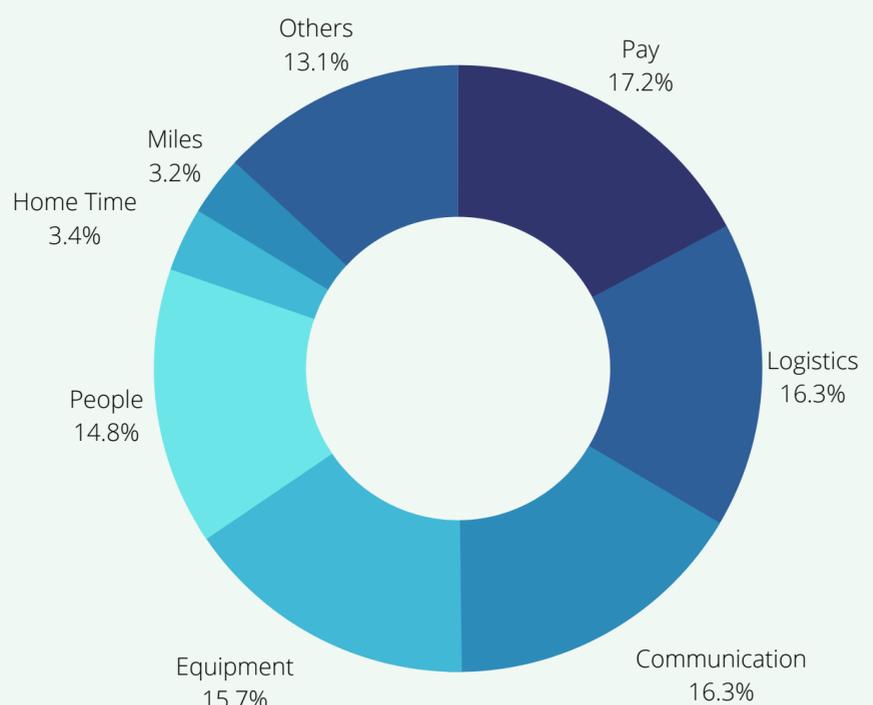
The top comments of 2021 were about equipment, people, logistics, praise, and pay. Additionally, this year WorkHound added several new data points, and fleets can take these insights to improve driver satisfaction, minimize frustrations, and create a healthy working environment in 2022.

## Summary Statistics

In 2021, 29% of comments were positive, 35% were negative, and 36% were neutral. Negative sentiment has grown, and burnout is high. Top categories associated with burnout include pay, logistics, and communication. WorkHound also identifies critical comments, such as, ‘I’m so mad, I’m going to quit,’ which can highlight a need for immediate intervention. In 2021, 16.5% of comments were deemed critical. The top critical comment themes were pay, logistics, communication, equipment, and people.

### The Numbers at a Glance

- 62.8K Comments
- 21.1K Workers
- 104 Companies
- 2.97 Average Comments per Worker
- 203 Average Number of Commenting Workers per Company
- 6.7 Satisfaction (on a 10-Point Scale)



## Tracking Retention

In 2021, fleets retained 8.7K workers by addressing specific driver comments through the Request-to-Reveal feature. This is up from 5.2K in 2020.

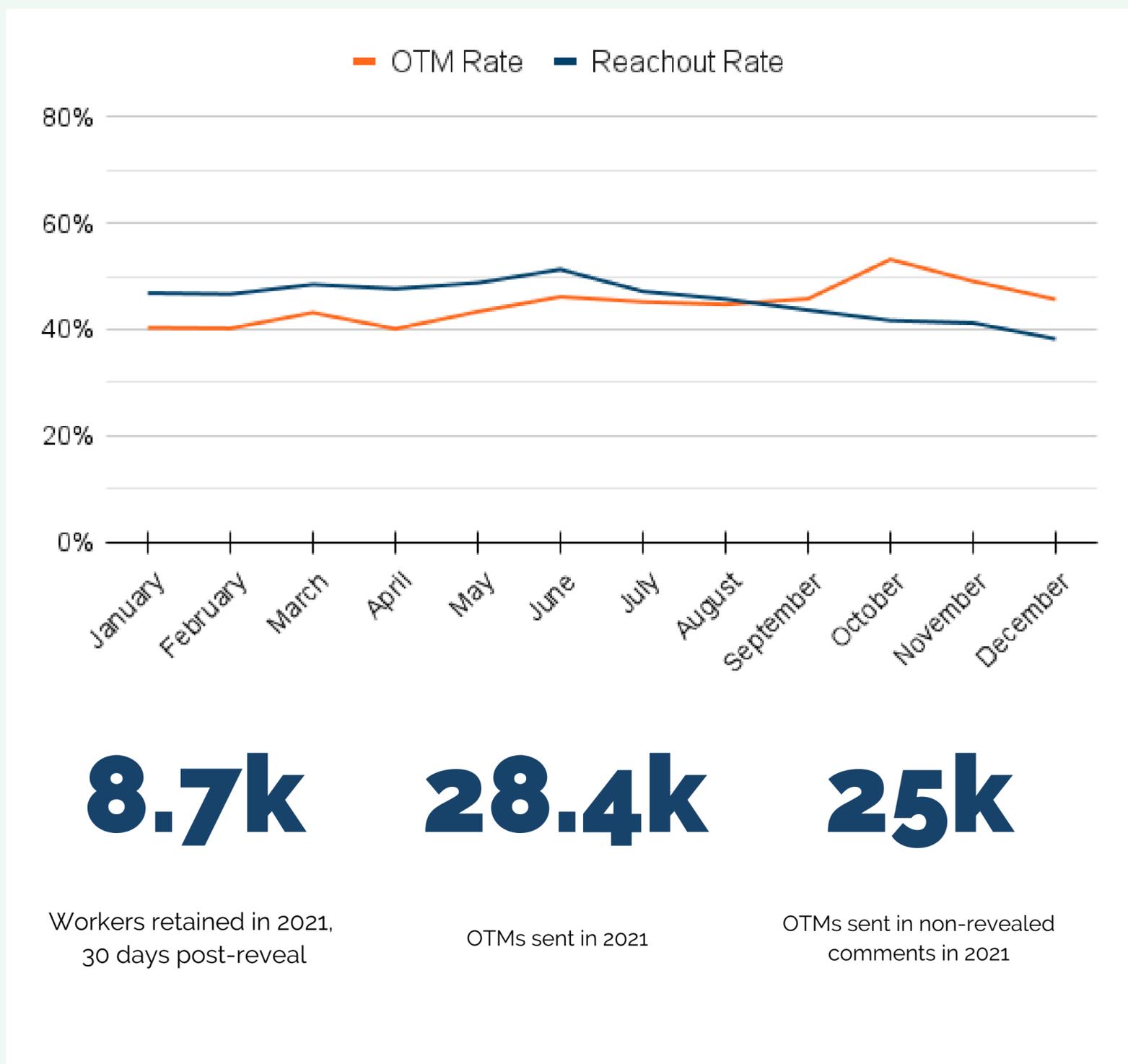
How does Request-to-Reveal work? Workers leave comments anonymously, but when those comments present an opportunity for their employers to intervene, carriers can send a message asking workers to reveal their identity so they can work one-on-one to find a solution. If workers agree, a timer starts, and carriers get to work. If workers are still employed 30 days later, they are considered retained.

In 2021, 5,534 unique workers left critical comments. The average comment length for critical comments is 337, which is markedly longer than the average length of non-critical comments. The increased length reveals that drivers who are ready to leave urgently share their needs in great detail, allowing their carriers to understand what needs to happen to keep them.

Even if workers choose not to reveal their identity, companies can still communicate to help resolve worker concerns. When workers decide not to disclose their identity or carriers determine that it isn't critical for fixing the problem, carriers can tap into the One-Time-Message feature. This feature allows carriers to message anonymous workers with information that equips them to resolve their concerns.

More than 28,000 messages were sent in 2021, and 25,000 of those messages were sent to workers who chose not to reveal their identities. A one-time message allows the companies to help workers gain more clarity in response to their feedback or resolve issues without waiting for the reveal.

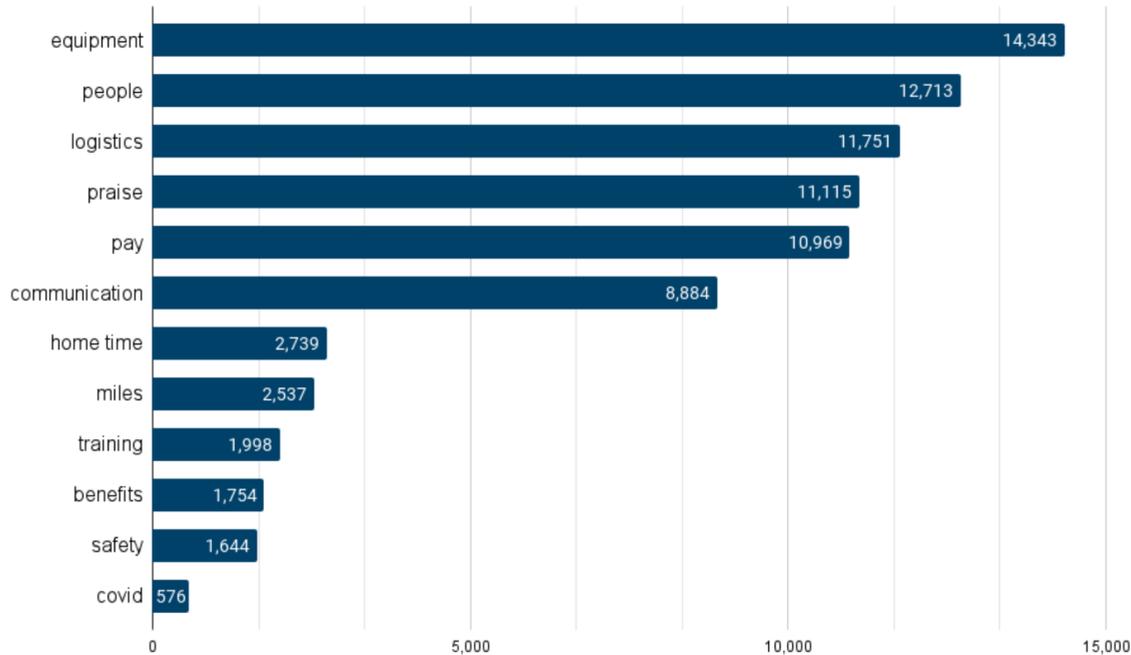
While much of the last two years has been a constantly evolving landscape in the trucking industry, a good portion of last year required quick solutions. One-time messages became a more systematic contact method than reach outs in the fourth quarter.



## Equipment Comments Outrank People, Logistics, and Pay

Drivers comment on equipment more than any other topic, which is not surprising given that equipment is not only drivers' tools to do their job but also is often their home. Equipment-related comments could be about their truck or truck-related amenities or challenges with maintenance, people, and communication tied to equipment.

In 2021, equipment shortages plagued the industry, and carriers of all sizes fought for new trucks and trailers. That means carriers are working to keep their fleet running and optimized without typical trade cycles. Stretching trade cycles can create driver frustration, and comments on equipment picked up around periods of regular trade cycles.



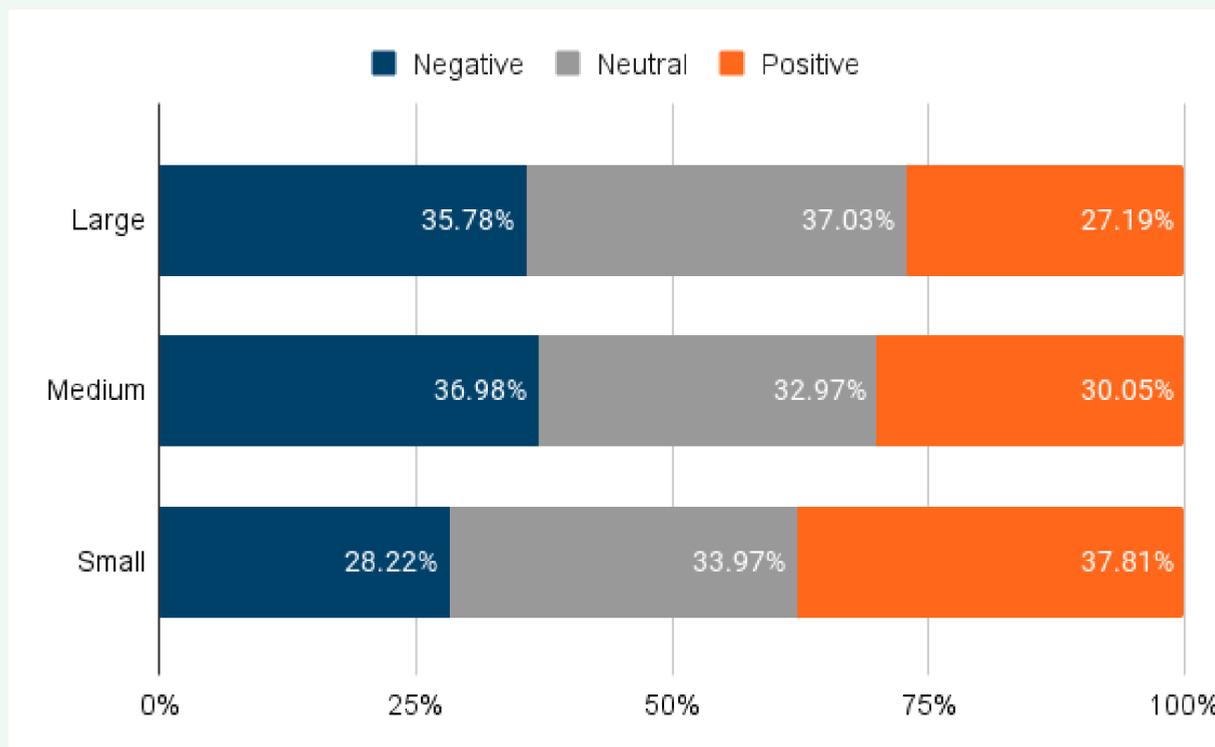
## Satisfaction by Company Size

Small companies have found a way to create a small village environment for their drivers versus a large city environment of a larger company. Instead of being a number in the pool of drivers, carriers can know someone on a first-name basis.

Large companies are starting to invest in retention. They see small companies have a family feel, and they are trying to duplicate that by creating specific touchpoints.

## Defining Company Size

- Small companies are 1-199 drivers
- Medium-sized are 200-499 drivers
- Large are 500 or more employees



## Training and Benefits Comments Provide Telling Information

Comments from drivers about training and benefits are particularly insightful. When drivers leave critical comments about training, they're about 50% more likely to leave. Yet when drivers mention benefits, they're more likely to stay, with 78% of them remaining at their company at the end of 2021. WorkHound dug deeper into the training and benefits themes this year, not only because they were the most talked about in 2020 but also because they're very comparable in comment volume and proved very different outcomes in 2021.

### The Significance of Training

There were just under 2,000 comments on training in 2021, which is 3.2% of all comments, demonstrating a satisfaction level that's actually equal to the average satisfaction rating across the board for 2021, which was 6.7%. Only 28.5% of the comments were positive, and nearly half of those who made comments about training left their company. Also noteworthy is the average message length related to training was 361 characters. The comment length is important because longer comments typically indicate dissatisfaction.

Training and onboarding are critical because 86% of new hires decide to stay with a company long-term in the first six months of employment, according to a study by Aberdeen. Additionally, in a 2019 Gallup poll, only 12% of employees strongly agree their organization does a great job of onboarding new employees. Plus, those who strongly agree their onboarding process was exceptional are 3.3 times as likely to strongly agree their job is as good or better than expected.

It is clear carriers have to take care of their employees at onboarding if they want them to stay around for the long haul.

When looking at training by company size, large companies receive comments about training at about twice the frequency of medium-sized companies. However, training comments at small and medium companies tend to be less positive when compared to driver experiences at larger companies. Large companies often have a more systemized approach and the resources to invest in more sophisticated training technology and techniques. They also focus on training the trainer rather than having another driver conduct the training.

WorkHound also investigated sub-themes tied to training that should cause concern. The top two were pay and communication. When training is mentioned in combination with pay or communication, there is a significant drop in satisfaction, starting with pay dropping down to 5.75 from 7.11, and with the mention of communication, satisfaction falls to 5.11. With pay, drivers commented they weren't getting paid, the pay wasn't adequate, or there was a problem.

In comments related to training and communication, drivers indicated that they felt training or orientation was unorganized, that the trainer wasn't equipped or was potentially overwhelmed, the training type wasn't effective for them, or they had an inaccurate description in the recruiting experience and, therefore, unrealized expectation.

Drivers often communicated challenges with training on some of their electronic devices. They may have gotten more familiar with a different device in a previous position, or they wanted additional training.

### Hear Directly from Drivers on Training

#### Training alone:

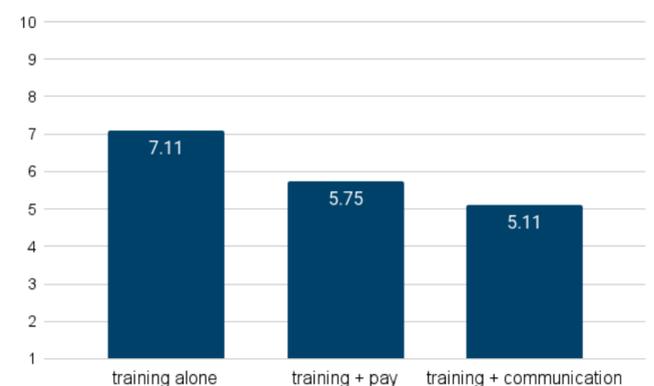
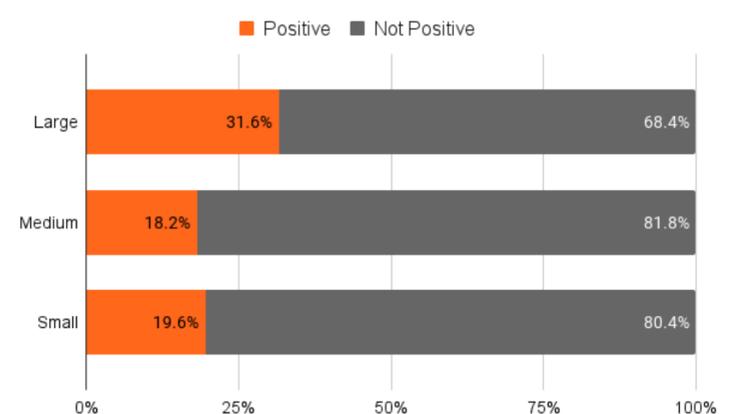
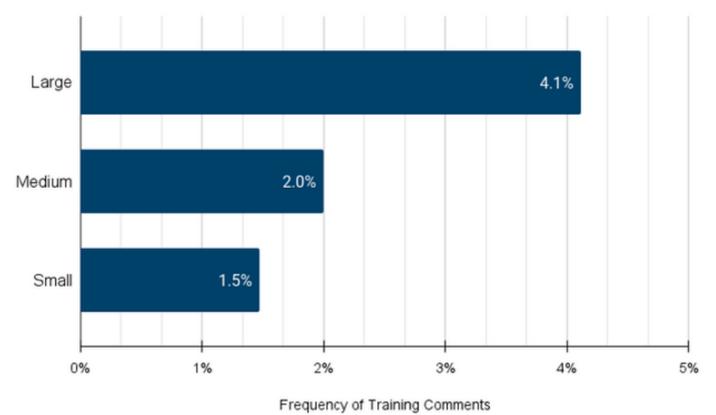
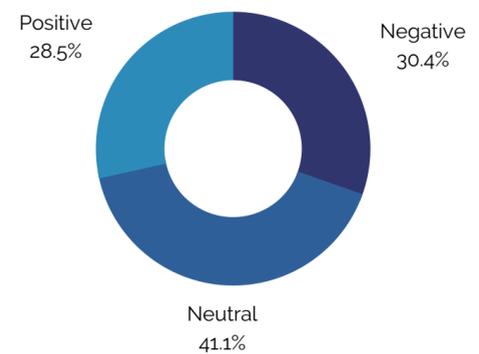
- "I didn't have proper training. I felt thrown into it, and I quit."

#### Training + Pay:

- "Pay for training is not enough when you're on the road, but I understand I still have bills not getting paid."
- "Training, training, training. I'm currently on my first day on my own, and I have absolutely no idea what I'm doing. I'm confused. If it wasn't for the guy I rode with for the ride-along giving me his number to call with questions I have, I would probably wouldn't be here. There needs to be more training and more pay for the ride-along."
- "I've been employed there almost a month and haven't even received my orientation pay. It sucks. I am just being honest."

#### Training + Communication:

- "Orientation was very unorganized. Joe was clearly overwhelmed and was not offered any assistance. I was not confident I would be ready for successful service. I had a 100% on-time rating with my old company, and that was due to thorough training."
- "I was told ten days training, 14 days on the truck, then I will be on my own... well, I was 14 days training, and I'm on this truck and still haven't been home to get my license, and now that I'm going to upgrade, whatever that is, I still can't drive home because I still have no license. Like, come on, let's get with it, and I still have bills that are due, and they can't get paid because the two little checks that I got are on a card that's going to take four days to transfer to my bank."



## On Training - Data Leads to Action:

Understanding the role training and onboarding play is critical as the trucking industry continues to focus further on building a new talent pipeline and bringing new entrants to the industry to combat the worsening driver shortage.

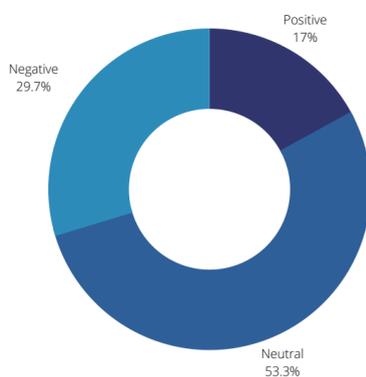
Based on the training data and comment insights, WorkHound recommends carriers:

- **Align expectations:** Ensure that drivers are receiving consistent and realistic information about the job. Carriers must ask and listen to the experience drivers expect from the company.
- **Audit Training:** Run a regular review on the way training is being conducted, both in the experience trainers are offering and the value the trainees are getting. It can be helpful to sit through training to see if it is engaging.
- **Train on New Equipment and Technology:** When carriers implement new technology or add new equipment, make sure you dedicate the appropriate amount of time or resources to train drivers on it. These are big investments, and, to get the most value, it's important to make sure these resources are being used.
- **Ongoing professional development:** Drivers are asking for opportunities to gain more knowledge and develop new skills. This includes getting appropriate training to become a trainer or additional professional growth within the company.

## Benefits Create Opportunities

As noted above, benefits are critical for carriers as they are an ideal opportunity for fleets to garner goodwill with drivers by addressing concerns or questions. Roughly 13% of comments in the benefits section were questions. Unlike the training theme comments, a majority of commenters who talk about benefits remained with their company through the end of the year. Only 22.8% are now inactive.

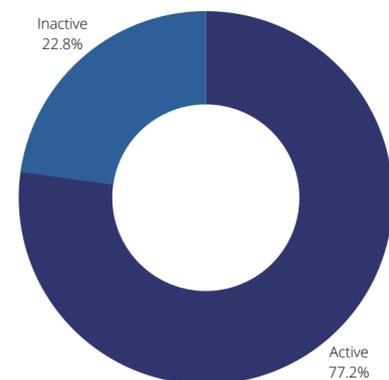
In the benefits theme, WorkHound received 1,754 comments, which is about 3.2% of all comments. The average satisfaction rating of this theme is 7.16, but only 17% of comments are positive, and the average message length is a little less than training with 291 characters.



Similar to the training theme, the sentiment around benefits seems to be a more common problem for medium and small companies. This could be due to the ability of larger companies to have access to systems and resources that might be inaccessible to smaller companies.

Fortunately, most of the comments clearly define the problem, and oftentimes, companies are able to take specific action on the feedback to address and resolve the concerns presented.

For example, workers here discussed constant changes in bonus structures, obstacles to taking PTO or other forms of time off, use of personal resources for job-related tasks, and challenges associated with the cost of dependents.



Some drivers expressed challenges adding dependents to their insurance, and while we've shared only one example of a challenge with a service animal, which is likely an ADA violation, this is unfortunately not a unique occurrence. Both of these examples provide actionable data that lead to opportunities for employers to take action to build trust and loyalty.

To increase driver satisfaction, carriers can regularly double-check to make sure drivers are using the resources offered to them in their benefits package. Drivers often only discuss benefits during recruiting and orientation, and it's easy for the information to be forgotten when there's a lot coming at them at once.

Lastly, carriers should take the time to audit the company's benefits package in comparison to competitors. Drivers know what competitors are offering, and while it is usually on the back of their trucks, it should also be expected and understood that drivers have access to recruiters from any other company in the industry.

## Hear Directly from Drivers on Benefits

- "Criteria for attaining bonus always changing without letting drivers know before supposed to be getting paid bonus..."
- "Tell your employees that you cannot request PTO or even a day off for a special event is bad taste for business... Being promised by recruiters that I will have my weekends off and now my operation managers telling me I cannot request off, well, that makes two strikes..."
- "Why do you discriminate against your drivers? We want a paid vacation and paid holidays."
- "What you offer is a joke and an insult. It tells us exactly how little you think of us and you don't appreciate us in the least little bit."
- "Trying to make me use my own personal WIFI for work and not paying toward cell phone or give a work phone. They are always talking about towing someone's vehicle with very little parking or with cameras near trucks, we are told to park..."
- "I love this company. However, the health insurance for my wife is about to kill me. At \$338 per week, it's almost like paying a small car note every single week."
- "I've only been with the company a week, and everyone has been really nice and supportive. One thing I would like to bring up is the huge pet deposit. I have been diagnosed with PTSD, and I have a companion dog, but I'm not sure if I want to bring him on the truck with me because of the deposit. He helps keep me focused on things, and when I'm feeling down or lonely, he's there for me..."



## Drivers Express Concerns Over Pay

**Half of all pay comments received were negative. Driver pay at many fleets increased in 2021, but drivers reported problems with pay being confusing or a need for additional communication to ensure drivers understand their pay.**

Pay is the top critical comment theme, and the experience a driver typically communicates in an urgent manner is often about errors and misunderstandings, such as pay errors that cause additional legwork for drivers to get corrected.

Pay in the trucking industry is the most complex of any industry. There are several levels and details that determine how much a driver earns weekly. There are times when even a payroll provider can't match drivers' earnings up with a TMS. It is important to make it simple and easy.

To increase driver satisfaction, fleets need to focus on transparency, certainty, and respect. Complex pay structures and fluctuations in load availability lead to confusion among drivers about how best to maximize their earning potential. To increase clarity, fleets can keep pay structures simple and transparent to minimize confusion.

A lack of transparency creates uncertainty for drivers on whether they will be able to meet their personal financial goals. The stress associated with such uncertainty may make drivers suspicious about the company's intentions. Carriers can set realistic pay expectations to preserve the company's integrity in the eyes of drivers.

When paychecks don't meet driver expectations, drivers feel disrespected and unappreciated. Even worse, they can feel that the company is actively trying to cheat them. Research shows that this sense of disrespect is a large contributor to turnover. As a best practice, fleets can ensure that pay is aligned with market rates to signal respect and appreciation to drivers.

## Drivers Connect to People

**Comments relating to people have remained positive. While people might be a reason drivers leave, they are also the reason why most stay.**

For all company sizes, people is the second most frequent theme, which isn't a surprise. Trucking is a people business, and people remain a priority for the driver experience. However, the experience of a driver at a large company and a small company is drastically different. Only 27% of drivers express a positive sentiment at a large company, whereas 37% of drivers at small companies express positivity.

In 2021, there were 12,713 people-related comments. Typically, when drivers are commenting about people, they're mentioning other people on the team. Finding positive and productive ways to encourage communication between drivers and departments is a good way to encourage that connection.

## Questions Surrounding COVID-19

**Drivers still remain concerned about COVID and continue to have questions.** Interestingly, this is the theme with the highest rates of comments with questions, which have actually increased in 2021 over 2020. In 2021, nearly 20% of comments in the COVID theme were questions, compared to 17% in 2020. This is significant because although there were fewer COVID-19 related comments in 2021, the distribution of questions actually increased.

Many of the comments within this theme were about fear and confusion. Drivers may have heard rumors or have concerns that were not addressed proactively. Typically, drivers were looking for clarity surrounding the impact of the news regarding possible vaccine mandates or borders delays.

What's especially notable about this theme is that it is the first time WorkHound has been able to truly measure the impact of current events and the impact of rumors. Additionally, this can be compared to unique current events at individual companies, such as mergers and acquisitions, leadership changes or consolidation. Trucking companies can utilize this insight to understand that a fast-acting and proactive internal communications strategy will have the greatest impact during a quickly changing environment.

### Hear Directly from Drivers on COVID-19

- "I'm nervous that the reason they asked today who has been vaccinated means that they are going to violate our rights to decide what we put in our own bodies..."
- "...And what are your plans to get all of your workers vaccinated with the federal vaccine mandate?"
- "I am worried about the forced vaccine. Will you guys comply, or will you guys do like several companies and refuse the unlawful mandate?"
- "The only thing I'm concerned about is vaccine mandates. I have no interest in experimental treatments so if the company decides to mandate, I either need to find another company or potentially lease a tractor."
- "All is always good. My only concern is what is the company policy on this new vaccine mandate. Y'all really need to let us know. Some like me will not take the shot. And we need to know where we stand. It's only fair we need to know what to do next."
- "It's a great company to work for. I wish they would not enforce the vaccine, but I will take it because I don't want to lose my job."
- "No information on vaccine mandates."
- "I am very worried that my company won't support the president's vaccine mandate."

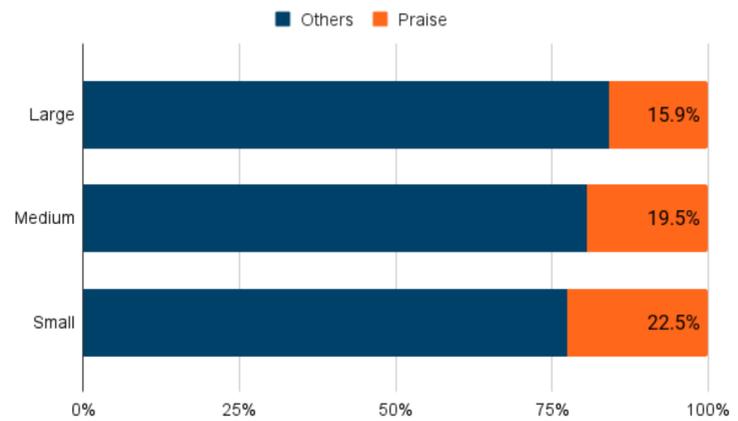


## Praise Correlates to Driver Satisfaction

Praise is the category where generally positive comments go, and WorkHound first started tracking praise at the beginning of 2020. In 2021, nearly half of all praise comments were about people, and drivers will often mention a specific, helpful person and use the praise theme to send shoutouts to their teams and management. This is useful for companies because they can see who is going above and beyond and doing well.

### Praise Stats:

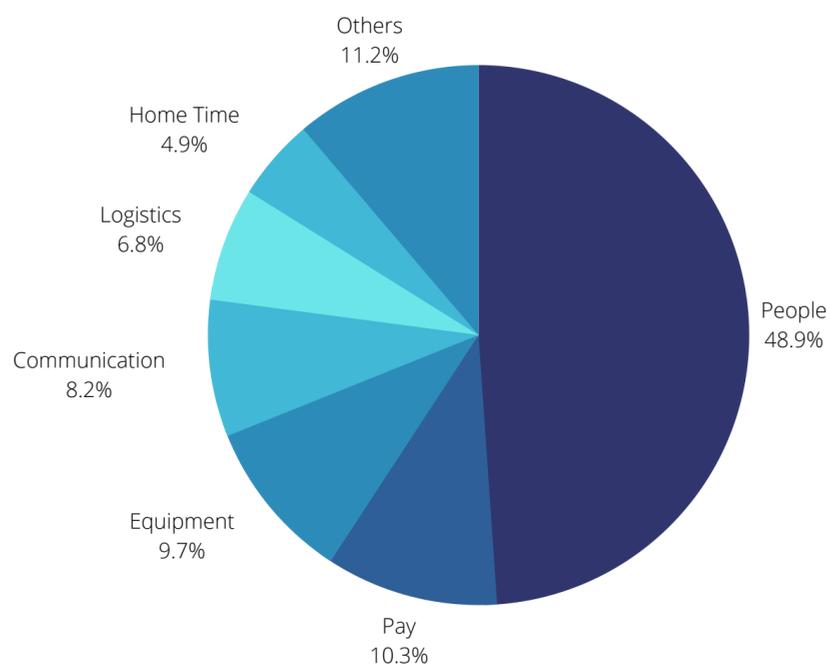
- Total Praise comments: 11,115
- Unique Praise commenters: 6,206
- Percentage of all comments: 17.7%
- Avg. comment length: 126
- Max comment length: 10,001
- Avg. Praise comments per month: 126



For small companies, "praise" is the most common theme. Praise tends to make up less of the distribution of comments as the company size grows. Small companies especially were noted for their praise at 22% of comments. As companies get larger, the praise theme begins to shrink, coming in at 19% for medium-sized companies and 15% for larger companies.

The timing of praise is noteworthy. Praise started climbing in the fourth quarter. Drivers began to leave more positive feedback around the holidays.

It is no surprise that the praise theme displays the highest driver satisfaction. Nearly half of all praise comments received in 2021 had other themes, including people. Trucking is a people business, after all. Drivers are apt to share positive experiences when teammates go above and beyond. Sometimes drivers share that they love their company in their comments, but they often share specific details outlining their appreciation.



Carriers can use praise to their advantage. Happy employees are some of the best advocates. To maximize praise, carriers can encourage referrals from workers who reveal after leaving praise comments, share praise comments with office staff to boost morale, share praise comments through social media channels, and encourage the recruiting team to share praise comments with potential hires.

### Hear Directly from Drivers on Praise

"I think my company is the best company out there. The people make it great. They allow you to vent, and they are some of the nicest people I have ever met.

- You never sit for loads.
- The trucks are top of the line, and they take care of their equipment.
- They make me feel important. My dispatcher, Rick Smits, is always praising me, and that's encouraging."

"Bailey, Bailey, Bailey. If it wasn't for her, I don't think I would have made it this far. Everything I was ready to give up, she stepped in to solve all my problems."

"Love the dispatchers and all the help they give me. Some go above and beyond for me, and I appreciate that to no end."

"It seems like the ones I am working with consider you as a coworker instead of an underling. We all have a job to do, and things go better when supervisors do not talk down to you."

"The owners are good to the drivers, and managers take care of their people."



## Actively Listen

The ultimate question is, ‘What should companies do with the information?’ Knowing what drivers care about is a chance for carriers to make sure they’re aligned on expectations and prioritize drivers’ needs. The highest priority should be on listening to drivers. People inside an organization were attracted to the company for a reason. Carriers need to understand what that reason was and keep drivers engaged. The best thing carriers can do in 2022 is to have a commitment to active listening.



## WorkHound’s methodology and mission

WorkHound feedback is requested with open-ended questions — not surveys — via a link accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Workers are sent the link once a week via a text message. The goal is to create a real-time feedback loop, in which workers provide their comments anonymously — the good, the bad, and the ugly — and then companies take action on that feedback. Lastly, to bring the feedback loop full circle, companies can then share with their employees the actions they’ve taken to address feedback.

## How WorkHound Works:

“WorkHound gives the drivers a voice. It gives them a platform where they can go and say, ‘this is my problem,’ without fear of retaliation. It’s about getting past that fear. We want everyone to know that it’s an open platform. We encourage drivers to tell us everything they want to tell us because we may not know something is going on.”

– Rachel Lovell, Vice President of People Operations, Ascend

“We have seen our driver turnover percentage plummet, particularly over our five-year history. The industry, in general, has very high turnover rates, so recruiting and retaining are critical. What I can say for sure is that our turnover numbers are below the industry average. So, over an 18-month period, our number of unique users has continued to climb. We have hundreds of drivers regularly commenting. WorkHound helps us figure out what we’re getting wrong from those drivers and helps us figure out how to communicate our efforts for drivers differently.”

– Ian Rozmiarek, Director of Talent Acquisition and Employee Engagement, USA Truck

“We use WorkHound daily to receive the real-time feedback anonymously so we can continuously improve our operations and retain our drivers... WorkHound has helped a lot with operations. Anything from minor things to larger situations. We’ve been able to take those comments and suggestions and use those improvements and acted on them.”

– Maribeth Knueve, Vice President of Dry Van Operations, Marten Transport

“When you lose touch with your drivers, you really lose something as a company. I wanted to be able to have access to the drivers, their feedback, their input, and what was going on in their lives without it being filtered through anyone else. WorkHound fit those needs perfectly.”

– Joyce Siqueira, Director of Operations, FreightWorks

“Drivers are happy to hear that we’re working on something. Even when it’s something that we can’t necessarily fix, having someone call and explain things to them can be very helpful. It’s about communication. It’s getting some kind of communication out to drivers who have reached out to us, letting them know that we hear them. As long as they know that someone is actively looking into something or working on it, that helps build trust.”

– Justin Cullars, Media Manager, Total Transportation of Mississippi

## Have Questions? Reach Out & Ask:



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The 2021 Driver Feedback Trends