The Importance of Taking Quality Photos

by Michael J. Cox

Photography is truth. —Jean Luc Godard

Mr. Godard is a highly regarded film director. Undoubtedly his quote refers to things he is passionate about. The words have great meaning to our business, and bring light to a common failure I see throughout my own centers, and the industry as a whole. We don’t take good pictures to help adequately describe the very expensive things we are trying to sell. Trucks are our passion, and when we sell them with photos—be it to end users, another dealer or your sales manager—we should take the best photos possible.

Many of us who have been around for a long time remember when Polaroid cameras were king. We would snap photos of the truck and staple the pictures to a filled out spec sheet. When we had to share the photos with an interested party across the country, we would take more photos, put them in an envelope and mail them. Polaroid film was expensive! Getting pictures developed was even more expensive. You actually had to have stamps in your desk for postage. Thinking about those times, it’s hard to believe we sold anything.

Today, taking photos is cheap. Tens of thousands of photos can fit on a single SD card in a digital camera. Thousands of photos can be stored on most smart phones. Email is basically free and the result is instant. The recipient of your photographs has them in minutes if not seconds after you send them.

Sadly, ease of use has not improved photo-taking ability. In fact, I think that because there is not an actual cost to snapping a photo, people give little thought to what they’re taking a picture of. The result is a lot of terrible photographs of trucks that do little to show defects, true condition, and value. But buyers (wholesale or retail) use these pictures along with the specs you share to make a buying decision. The better your photos are, the better your expertise as a salesperson will appear to your buyer. In fact, if you are new to our business or your sales skills are a little challenged, good photos could make you look like a genius. Buying decisions are being made faster and often times buyers—wholesale or retail—are not taking time to physically inspect the trucks they are purchasing. Photos are going to become even more important.

There are some basic photos that you should take of any truck when it is presented to a potential buyer.

Specifically:
1. VIN
2. Odometer
3. Interior 1 (Should show interior configuration of sleeper)
4. Interior 2 (Should show dash options and gauges)
5. Interior 3 (Should show condition of front seats)
6. Back of cab left side
7. Left rear tires clearly showing tread depth and wheels
8. Back profile of truck
9. Right rear tires clearly showing tread depth and wheels
10. Back of cab right side

Raise Hood
11. Right side engine bay
12. Right front tire showing tread depth
13. Left side engine bay
14. Left front tire showing tread depth

Lower Hood (Don’t forget to latch it!)
15. Whole truck from left front corner
16. Whole truck from right front corner
As I write this, both UTA membership and sponsor support are at all-time highs. These very positive milestones, while most welcome, also increase our responsibilities as board members. But first and foremost we are responsible to you—our fine membership—which also includes our generous sponsors and their continued support. The advantages our organization provides its membership are varied, growing, and effective. We encourage all of you to make yourself aware of the programs, and other benefits of your UTA membership, which include:

- UTA-sponsored Training Classes
- Timely Webinars in concert with OEMs
- The Industry Watch Newsletter
- Young Members Group
- Continually Updated Website
- The Annual Kansas City Golf Open
- Annual Convention

One of the most important things we do to keep our organization successful and effective is to maintain and refresh our board. Members of the board serve three years and officers are elected at the board meeting each November during the UTA Annual Convention.

We urge you to prepare soon if you have plans to make nominations for this year’s Board of Directors and/or the Lifetime Achievement Award. Your nominations for either the Board or LTA Award must be received by June 15th. Board nominees have from the time we receive and they accept their nomination up until July 10th to prepare and submit their Bios and Photos. Those are posted to the website, and by mid-August Corporate Members cast their votes. Voting is an electronic process, which makes tallying results easy and seamless.

The voting deadline for the board is August 15th and new board members will be posted on the UTA website the last couple of days of August, or the first few days of September. The Lifetime Achievement Award nomination process occurs during that same period, and that outstanding UTA member is also announced at the convention. Nomination forms are available on the UTA website. If you have any questions, please send me an email and I will give you a call.

CURRENT OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

UTA Officers

President: Craig Kendall
Vice President: Rick Clark
Secretary: Amanda Kent
Treasurer: John Cosgrove
President Emeritus: Marty Crawford

UTA Board Members

Deane Jeske
Amy Shahan
Hal Dickson
Mike Roney
Charles Cathey
Jody Johnson
Brock Frederick
Bobby Williams
Kelly Coldiron
Brandon Hess (Alternate)

I really hope this concise message will help you start thinking about this year’s elections!

Kind Regards,
Charles Cathey
charles@uta.org

It’s hard to beat a person who never gives up.
~Babe Ruth
It’s always a treat to welcome new members to the Used Truck Association. Each month we profile our new (or just returning) members in this newsletter. New members have the opportunity to complete a bio and send a photo so our current members can learn more about you. We hope to learn not just how to reach you, but what you enjoy about the work you do, why you joined the UTA, and what gets your gears going as a person. So please return your questionnaire so your fellow UTA members can get to know you!

We asked Gary about other industries in which he could envision himself, and were intrigued by his answer. “I was in a family owned advertising agency—Gray Matter Media, Inc. “Smart Advertising.” Gary has always been intrigued with the marketing aspects of all businesses, and “especially lately, with the onset of social media.”

Outside of the workaday world, Gary’s a runner, and at 60, is preparing for his second marathon in October 2017. He’s also involved in Kairos Prison Ministry, a Christian faith-based ministry that “addresses the spiritual needs of incarcerated men, women, youth, and their families,” he explained. “By sharing the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, Kairos hopes to change hearts, transform lives, and impact the world.”

Gary also had some thoughts he wanted to share with his fellow UTA members. “I have had many successes in the Used Truck business and it is unfortunate that many dealers still shy away from that side of the market,” he said.”Volatility in the used market, caused by a lot of factors including EPA mandates, should level out and the industry should be more consistent going forward.”

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Kiran and William, the Managing Partners for TraceIT LLC, started out in 2016, developing technology solutions for the trucking industry. They have joined the UTA to learn how they can continue to “leverage technology to help companies across the trucking industry, and collaboratively co-create affordable solutions for them to grow their businesses.”

When we ask about their favorite part of their jobs many people say “the people in our industry,” and we can understand why. Kiran and William view truckers as “the men and women who help keep this country rolling,” adding they’re “continually amazed and impressed with the dedication and pride of the American Trucker.”

The Partners are quite happy in the field they are in, doing what they do, and couldn’t imagine doing anything else. “We are in the 3PL technology business specializing on the Trucking Industry, helping the backbone of America with affordable technology to run and grow their businesses,” they said. “What could be better?”

When the work day is behind them both Kiran and William love fishing, both bay-fishing and near-shore. “We’ve spent many hours in the bay out of Port Mansfield going after the Reds and Speckled Trout,” they said.

Finally, Kiran and William say they’re looking forward to meeting UTA’s members to learn more about the challenges they face within the industry.

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Gary tells us he started in trucking in 1981, when he was 23 years old. That first job was as a Commissioned HD Truck Salesman for Lake Peterbilt in Erie, PA.

Asked why he joined the UTA Gary shared some specific goals. “I hope to gain insight into the Used Truck business from a different perspective than mine,” he said. “Vocational trucks are so region and industry specific, it is helpful to pick the brains from other used truck guys in other geographical areas and industries.”

Gary’s also looking forward to serving as a resource to other members given his many successful years selling, and in management. “I might have something interesting to share with others in the group,” he suggested.

Yes, Gary’s been in the industry for more than 35 years. But he’s new to the Mack/Volvo family, and looks forward to meeting many new people from in that truck family. He’s responsible for nine stores and six salespeople, in his job. Although that’s challenging, he said, he enjoys “working with a diverse set of salespeople, managers and markets.”
Jason finds his success in the industry through interactions with the people he works with and the customers they serve. “I love making the deal and the people you meet,” he said. “I am available to salespeople and customers always. I try to meet as many prospects as possible. If they’re in the office, I introduce myself and get involved in the deal.”

Coincidently, Jason’s success and his enjoyment of his job come from the very same source. “The people part is what I enjoy,” he notes. “You meet people from all walks of life and many different nationalities. I live for the handshake when the deal is done.”

When we asked him to recall some of his proudest moments in his career, his first response was getting tapped by Mike Nacarato to come to Nashville and talk about a job. “He owned the Volvo dealership of the year, and he called me one night to see if my wife and I would like to come to Nashville to talk about expanding the Nacarato used truck department,” Jason recalled. “That made me feel like I was doing things right.” He has most recently been elected to the board for the Volvo Premium Group. But, pride and success came to him during his time with Arrow Trucks, too. In 2014 he and his staff made three million dollars for a branch at Arrow. “With 17 locations and 70 years in the business, that has only occurred three times,” Jason explained. He is proud to say that he and his staff account for one of those times. Twice he and his staff at Arrow were awarded the Branch Operational Excellence Award, something that makes him especially proud since it was the effort of his entire staff that made the awards possible. Jason is also proud that he’s seen his own staff move up in the Arrow organization. “Four current Branch Managers at Arrow were part of my sales team at one time or another,” he said. Helping people succeed in this business and seeing them become great leaders now also brings him pride. “You are only as strong as your team,” Jason said.

Jason does admit that he wishes he understood the different motivations that drive people earlier in his career. “Some want a pat on the back,” he explained. “Some want an award on the wall, and others just want to make more money. Know your people. They make you look good.” To encourage younger sales associates Jason has a three-step bit of advice. “Talk trucks every day,” he said. “Don’t judge by appearance (trucks or people). Know your inventory.” Going forward he sees challenges for both those just starting out and veterans of the industry. Jason believes one of the challenges is simply the volume of trucks being manufactured. “It’s amazing the number of trucks being built, even in bad years,” he said. He also sees challenges due to the few export opportunities in the industry. He attributes this paucity to the value of the U.S. dollar and the challenges of regulations. “We have to find a home for more trucks than ever before with very few export options,” he explained.

Jason and his wife, Mercedes, have two children. Bryan is 14 and in the eighth grade. Marissa is 9 and a fourth grader. The couple spends lots of time attending baseball tournaments with their son and other sporting events. “My favorite things are the kids’ sports and going to the bars in Nashville to listen to the music with my wife,” he said. “I also enjoy golf, LSU football, and the St. Louis Cardinals.”
New Members continued from page 3

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Eric Samp, Director of Used Trucks
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Eric began in trucking in 1999, working as a truck Engine District Manager for Caterpillar.

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We’re amazed that 2002 was 15 years ago now, but it is. And that’s the same year that Joe Spencer started out in trucking. His job was in used truck sales for Freightliner of Utah.

We expect that we’ll see Joe at the UTA convention and some of the other events UTA holds throughout the year, as he’s hoping to meet new people as a UTA member.

Joe says the best part of the job he has now is helping small fleets grow in size. Just helping to be a part of that growth is exciting for him.

We asked about other fields he could see himself in, but Joe derives all he needs from trucking. “Trucking is a dynamic and exciting industry,” he said, and “it’s nice to see it evolve.”

Joe is also into the University of Utah’s annual Tailgating Competition. “After a year of rigorous training and coaching, we won the University of Utah’s 2012 NCAA Ultimate Tailgating Championship,” Joe reports.

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Industry Events Calendar

APRIL

30-May 3 • National Private Truck Council Annual Conference & Exhibition
Cincinnati, OH
http://www.nptc.org/

MAY

1-4 • Advanced Clean Transportation Expo
Long Beach Convention Center
Long Beach, CA
http://www.actexpo.com/agenda

25-27 • ATHS National Convention and Truck Show
Iowa State Fairgrounds
Des Moines, IA
www.ATHS.org

JUNE

11-13 • UTA Sponsored Training: Selling for Success 2017
Courtyard Rancho Cucamonga
Rancho Cucamonga, CA
uta.org

22-23 • Kansas City Golf Open
Kansas City, MO
uta.org

SEPTEMBER

17-19 • UTA Sponsored Training: Selling for Success 2017
Courtyard Chicago O’Hare
Des Plaines, Illinois
uta.org

25-29 • North American Commercial Vehicle Show
Georgia World Congress Center
Atlanta, GA
http://nacvshow.com/

NOVEMBER

1-4 • 18th Annual UTA Convention
Paris Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV
www.uta.org
Sixteen photos allows you to present the truck accurately to potential buyers. If there is some special option on the truck, like an APU, you should take a photo of that also. If there are deficiencies, like oil leaks or body damage, you should also take detailed photos of those. The diagram on page 1 illustrates the position each photo should be taken from. Stand back or move closer—whatever you need to do to get what you want in the photo. No one wants to see a photo with the top of the truck cut off. Likewise, the photo should not make the truck appear that it is across the street at the truck stop.

Note that pictures 1-16 flow around the truck from the driver’s door to the time you open and close the hood and finish with two front photos. Smartphones are terrific to use for this job. You can usually email the photos right off of the phone to your recipient.

Many people are unaware that there are different sizes of digital photos. Smartphone cameras may be able to take a photo up to 10 megapixels. That is too big for this job. Remember, you are emailing these things, not printing them for posters to hang on your wall. Select the smallest size on your Smartphone (usually 640x480) or camera. It will make it a lot easier on your recipient.

The environment your photos are taken is important. Make sure the sun is behind you when you take the photo, or the truck you are taking a photo of will look like an ethereal being emerging from the heavens. Cloudy days are the best days to take photos. Try to not have people in the background. If you are taking a picture of body damage, it helps to have a reference point in the photo, like a business card. This allows viewers to judge the size of the damage being photographed. Under no circumstance should you take photos at dawn, dusk or (duh…) at night. Don’t laugh, you’d be surprised how many photos I get where the camera flash illuminates the reflectors on the truck and there are cars in the background with headlights on.

Good photos sell trucks faster. Your customer appreciates good information. Good photos speak volumes about the condition and specifications of the truck you are selling. When you provide good pictures to your customer, your sale is easier, your values are higher and your bank account is fatter. Photography is truth.

Use your voice to express emotion and pace yourself. Use pauses to create drama and convey a sense of control over your environment.

Facial expressions. Make eye contact, and let listeners see as well as hear your passion. You don’t want every emotional reaction to be transparent (for example, it’s rarely a good idea to show anger), but smiles and frowns, concern and amusement, all communicate your humanity.

Gestures. Your body language can emphasize a point. For example, clasp your hands to illustrate “working together,” “integration,” or “solidarity.” Or let your palms fall open to demonstrate “opening doors,” “transparency,” and so on. You can experiment with your own vocabulary of gestures by practicing your presentations in front of a mirror.

Expressions of moral conviction or shared sentiment. Affirming shared beliefs and experiences can be highly motivating, as sociologists have long known. When you reflect back to your group members their own values or ideas, you activate these primal feelings of solidarity and excitement. Build around points of connection.

Contrasts. These are easy to learn and use: some variation of “Not this—but that,” or “On the one hand—on the other hand.” The form generates drama naturally and is pleasing to our brains, which like dualities.

Three-part lists. Three is, indeed, the magic number: it shows a pattern, gives an impression of completeness, and is easy to remember. Use this technique when you’re at the dramatic high point of a comment, especially a call to action.


Michael J. Cox is General Sales Manager, SelectTrucks of America

Quality Photos continued from page 1

Finding Your Voice as a Leader

We're accustomed to thinking that great communicators have a special kind of charisma, a way of holding themselves or of writing that makes them sound authoritative. John Antonakis, Marika Fenley, and Sue Liechti, researchers at the University of Lausanne, studied charisma in dozens of business leaders, and found several physical and rhetorical tactics that were universally effective—so effective that in one study, they resulted in a 60 percent improvement in how observers rated leaders’ competence.

But charisma isn't a magic trait that some people have and some people don’t. Becoming a masterful communicator is possible for anyone who learns the set of behaviors these researchers identified:

Animated voice. Monotone voices sound apathetic, so vary the volume of your voice when you speak. Use your voice to express emotion and pace yourself. Use pauses to create drama and convey a sense of control over your environment.

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When Driving, Who Do You Trust?

by Ellen Voie

Recently I was traveling along an interstate within a construction area and realized I was merely inches from the driver pulling a set of doubles next to me. As I watched those huge tires alongside my convertible, I recalled an elementary school class about trust.

Our teacher asked us to define the word “trust” and how it related to our own young lives. She pointed to the chairs we were sitting on and asked us if the act of sitting involved trust. In other words, did we trust the legs of the chair to hold us up? Did we trust the chair to give us the accommodations we expected?

Until that point, I hadn’t thought about trust in that way, but as I slowed through the construction zone with a combination tractor-trailer next to me, it became more clear.

I looked at that rig and realized I had placed my trust (and my life) in the driver, the carrier, and the equipment.

One dictionary’s definition of trust, as a verb, was believe in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of. This was exactly the thought I had as I shared the (narrow) roadway with a commercial truck and driver.

I had to trust that driver to be well rested and physically fit to drive the tractor-trailer. Since I am well aware of the regulations affecting the industry, I knew the driver had to hold a current commercial driver’s license and had to have a current DOT medical certificate. I also knew the operator was subject to random drug and alcohol checks through the carrier.

My thoughts turned to training and the proper amount of education and instruction the driver had completed to understand highway rules, as well as those regulations pertaining to the trucking industry, like parking restrictions, weigh stations, and idling laws.

In reality, I felt confident the person operating the combination tractor-trailer only inches away from my vehicle was qualified and skilled in the role.

I also trusted the driver to refrain from texting while driving and to not be using a hand held mobile phone on the road. Although we’ve all heard horror stories of drivers who watch videos or other instances of distracted driving, I felt confident the person next to me was focused on driving.

I also needed to be assured he or she was in compliance with the hours of service and the logbooks were up-to-date, factual, and in compliance. I didn’t notice if there was a sticker indicating the driver was using e-logs, but I felt assured there were no violations because I trusted the driver and the carrier.

Remember, trust means to believe in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of something.

As I noticed the name on the truck and trailers, I felt confident the carrier had ensured the safety of the vehicle. I trusted the company to make sure the tires were safe and the equipment was checked and rechecked for any defects or adjustments. I trusted the brakes to be operable and the lights to be working and compliant.

Even the manufacturer of the tractor and the trailer had to be trusted to design and build equipment that would allow me to travel on a very narrow lane in a construction zone in a low convertible and feel safe. Truly, sitting in a car next to a combination vehicle while moving through a close passageway could be intimidating for anyone, but I felt a level of trust most drivers might not experience.

Since I work in the trucking industry, I have a realistic view of the skills and expertise drivers need to share the road with four wheelers (including convertibles!). I actually feel safer alongside a professional driver than I do with automobiles, since I don’t have the trust in knowing the person behind the wheel is rested, focused, and qualified to drive.

The next time you are on the road, consider your level of trust for the truck and driver alongside your car. Compare the safety data of the trucking industry to those outside and then look at the qualifications needed to operate a commercial vehicle on the road.

Who do you trust?

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Eddie Walker recently relocated his company, Best Used Trucks, to a new facility in Rhome, TX. Moving brings change and a chance to reflect, so UTA's Industry Watch recently interviewed Eddie and his wife Dianne to bring us all up to date.

**IW:** After being in one place for 16 years, how does it feel to pull up stakes and move to a new location, and how challenging was it?

**E & D:** At our age “Very tiring”! Before our recent and only move, we were in Ft. Worth, TX at 9401 North Freeway, or IH35. We started Best Used Trucks there in April 2001. Our new location is only eight miles northwest in Rhome, TX. We had purchased this (five acre) property about eight years ago, and in August 2016 started construction on our new facility. We had plans to move before the end of December. We came very close to that goal! We moved on time and were about 80 percent set up time by the end of January. We went four weeks without office phones (sorry). We are now totally functional but still making a few finishing touches.

**IW:** What is your new address and what’s the story behind it?

**E & D:** We enjoy 650 feet facing Hwy 287 and Hwy 114 on the north side of the freeway, but we had a unique situation with our new address. Our new property was at the end of a very short street, about 75 feet long, named Denton Street. Our property was the only thing on the south side of the street, with nothing on the north side. The street dead ended to our property, and we were going to be the only building on the street. I asked to choose my address, and the city granted my request. Here’s my thinking behind the address I asked for. (1) I’ve been selling Peterbilt’s for many years. (2) Denton is the home of the Peterbilt factory. (3) The Model 359 is Peterbilt’s flagship truck. So I asked for “359 Denton Street!” With prayers answered, our permanent address is now, Best Used Trucks, 359 Denton Street, Rhome Texas 76078. It will take a while for Google to recognize the new address. Just leave off 359 and it will point to our driveway.

**IW:** Do you miss serving on the UTA board since you did so for so long?

**Eddie:** Absolutely! I miss the challenge of helping to make the UTA a respectable organization that could and did attract the high caliber of individuals it enjoys today. I also miss the contact with friends who we have made during this period of our lives. I am a blessed man to have been able to associate with the UTA family over the years. We shared a lot of love together along with gathering many unforgettable memories.

**Dianne:** I miss seeing all our great friends with whom we worked. The UTA family is a terrific group of wonderful people.

**IW:** Do you have any plans to get back involved with UTA management in any way?

**E & D:** Absolutely not. We have given our all to the cause of building the association. We will continue to be members and give our support in any way when needed. But we feel we gave our “Best” when it was most needed and feel good with the results. It was time to step aside and let the capable current management team take it to the next level. We both are very proud of being a part of this association.

**IW:** What do you like most about your new store?

**E & D:** E- I like the 742’ long x 30’ wide 8’ concrete drive in and out driveway. D- I like having us all on one floor level together. Also, it’s easy to keep clean and has windows all around with plenty of room and light. We also like for our truckers to pull in with their trailers, shop and drive out without getting off “Denton Street.” Scott likes being out of the construction zone. We all agree, it doesn’t compare to our old place!
IW: Eddie, you’ve recently celebrated your 75th birthday. How much longer will you stay active with Best Used Trucks?

Eddie: As long as I can be productive. I’m not sure I can spell retirement. My daily ambition is to: “Wake up, get up, cleanup, dress up and show up SOMEWHERE!” Dianne and Scott will probably not have a problem reminding me of the definition of productive.

Dianne: I am ready to go to work for Calloways Nursery watering plants, or maybe I’ll just concentrate on our own back yard. But for now, I’ll hang with my partner for a while longer. We believe we make a pretty good team!

IW: Any other thoughts for UTA members?

E&D: THANKS, UTA, for the education and the MEMORIES. You were with us through sad times when we lost Cody, our son. And you were with us in happy times when I, along with Dianne and other family members in attendance, proudly accepted the honor of receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award. We were good to and for each other! We love and appreciate each and every one of you. Come visit anytime.

Eddie and Dianne Schafer Walker
Spring Thaw is a Slow One
Dealers remain more optimistic than pessimistic as we enter the second quarter, as new truck orders continue to strengthen and used truck volume continues to trend upwards. However, March’s auction and retail results were not particularly impressive, indicating market conditions are changing gradually.

Sleeper Tractors – Auction/Wholesale
Volume of our benchmark model was up substantially in March, for the highest result in twelve months. However, the volume of all aerodynamic sleeper tractors was low compared to recent months. Pricing of our benchmark model was 2.2% lower month-over-month, which is slightly worse than our 1.5%-2.0% guideline for 2017.

March auction performance of our benchmark model was as follows: MY2013: $31,443 average; $2,648 (or 7.8%) lower than February
MY2012: $26,522 average; $2,917 (or 12.4%) higher than February
MY2011: $24,133 average; $2,101 (or 8.0%) lower than February

Low volume is not necessarily a bad thing in the auction channel, since it suggests a smaller number of trucks returning off trade (assuming a consistent no-sale percentage). Volume has been the primary factor behind depreciation since mid-2015, so fewer trucks hitting the market should support more solid pricing. At the same time, we know the returning supply will be substantial through 2019, so any volume-based pricing solidity will merely reflect monthly fluctuations.

See the “Volume of all Aerodynamic Sleeper Tractors Sold…” and “Average Selling Price: Benchmark Sleeper Tractor” graphs for detail.

The average sleeper tractor sold wholesale in February was 68 months old, had 337,348 miles, and brought $29,229. Compared to January, trucks sold in February were 10 months newer, had 36,685 (or 6.4%) fewer miles, and brought $4,596 (or 18.7%) more money. Compared to February 2016, the average sleeper sold this month was 9 months newer, had 50,452 (or 8.6%) fewer miles, and brought $4,183 (or 12.5%) less money.

Trucks three to five years of age took a hit in February on an average basis, but this dip was due to a greater number of specific low-priced models impacting the average. Generally, individual models saw little change from January to February. For reference, average wholesale pricing for this cohort was $42,583 - $9,451 (or 18.2%) lower than January. The volume of late-model trucks wholesaled in February was much greater than January, so the flat pricing may be viewed positively.

Average pricing by age as was as follows:
3 year-old trucks: $54,050 - $18,593 (or 25.6%) lower than January
4 year-old trucks: $40,207 – $11,191 (or 21.8%) lower than January
5 year-old trucks: $33,491 - $1,429 (or 4.5%) higher than January

Again, the drastically lower average figures are attributable to a greater volume of low-priced models depressing the results. Actual model-by-model pricing was generally unchanged in February.

See the “Average Sleeper Tractor Pricing by Model Year (All Wholesale)” graph for detail.

Sleeper Tractors – Retail
The average sleeper tractor retailed in February was 72 months old, had 449,656 miles, and brought $49,878. Compared to January, the average sleeper was 4 months newer, had 2,172 (or 0.5%) fewer miles, and brought $2,562 (or 5.4%) more money. Compared to February 2016, this average tractor was 9 months older, had 449,656 miles, and brought $49,878. Compared to January, the average sleeper was 4 months newer, had 2,172 (or 0.5%) fewer miles, and brought $2,562 (or 5.4%) more money. Compared to February 2016, this average tractor was 9 months older, had 449,656 miles, and brought $49,878.

Our three to five year-old group continued to trend lower year-over-year. Average pricing for this cohort in February was $62,480 - $3,430 (or 5.2%) lower than January. Our three to five year-old group continued to trend lower year-over-year. Average pricing for this cohort in February was $62,480 - $3,430 (or 5.2%) lower than January. Average pricing for this group through the first two months of the year is $5,904 (or 8.4%) lower than the same period of last year.

Average pricing by age as was as follows:
3 year-old trucks: $76,839 - $1,529 (or 2.0%) lower than January
4 year-old trucks: $65,354 – $1,524 (or 2.3%) lower than January
5 year-old trucks: $45,207 - $7,237 (or 13.8%) lower than January

See the “Average Retail Selling Price: 3-5 Year-Old Sleeper Tractors” graph for detail.
Individual makes and models generally lost more value than anticipated in February. We still expect depreciation to relax in upcoming months, as demand incrementally improves.

See the "Average Retail Selling Price of Selected 3-5 Year-Old Sleeper Tractors" graph for detail.

Looking at the number of retail sales per rooftop, volume trended back up in February after dipping in January. February's result of 5.4 trucks brings the 2017 average to 5.2 – 0.7 higher than the same period of 2016. March's incoming data points to somewhat lower results, but we expect the gradual upward trend to continue in upcoming months as demand incrementally improves.

See "Number of Trucks Retailed per Dealership Rooftop" graph for detail.

Medium Duty Trucks

Starting with Class 3-4 cabovers, a much better environment in February, combined with a newer, lower-mileage mix of trucks, drove volume and pricing of our benchmark group of 4-7 year-old units much higher than January. February's average pricing was $21,494 – the highest figure in at least five years. This figure was $8,172 (or 61.3%) higher than January, and $4,683 (or 27.9%) higher than February 2016.

Pent-up demand resulting from fewer auctions in January are probably partially responsible for the positive results. At the same time, February's average is quite a bit higher than expected. If March's results continue this trend, we may need to revise our outlook more positively.

See the "Average Wholesale Selling Price: 4-7 Year-Old Class 3-4 Cabovers" graph for detail.

Looking at conventionals, Class 4's returned to outperforming Class 6's, following a mildly encouraging month for heavier-GVW models. Our benchmark group of Class 4 conventionals had its strongest month since before the recession, while our Class 6 group came in with a fairly good month similar to January.

Specifically, Class 4's averaged $24,478 in February. This figure is $4,235 (or 20.9%) higher than January, and $5,805 (or 31.0%) higher than February 2016. Class 6's averaged $21,200 in February. This figure is $729 (or 3.3%) lower than January, and $1,589 (or 7.0%) lower than February 2017.

Volume for Class 4 was moderately higher than last month, while volume for Class 6 was very similar. We continue to view the Class 6 market as lukewarm, as buyers continue to show interest in lighter-GVW trucks. There is more upside than downside for all GVW classes in upcoming months.

See the "Average Wholesale Selling Price: 4-7 Year Old Conventionals by GVW Class" graph for detail.
Industry News Briefs

HD/MD Orders Reach 14-Month High: ACT

We know you’re reading this in April, but we’re writing this in March and for some reason the year still seems new. Maybe it’s the snow on the ground reminding us that Spring isn’t here yet. But in the world of Class 5-8 trucks, however, we’ve definitely turned a corner.

ACT Research, says that preliminary Class 5 to 8 data for February show industry orders rose to a 14-month high at 45,900 units. Compared to February 2016 the aggregate volume is up 12 percent.

Looking just at Class 8 models, in February, NA net orders also hit a fourteen-month high at 23,200 units. February was the second straight month where orders exceeded trends and expectations. “Orders rose 28% versus year ago February. That gain was only the third positive year-over-year comparison in the past two years,” said Kenny Vieth, ACT’s President and Senior Analyst.

He continued, “Weak orders in 2016 and an improving economy should make positive year to year comparisons a monthly occurrence as we move through 2017.” Preliminary North American Classes 5-7 orders in February were nearly identical to January at 22,700 units. Actual orders in January were 22,744 units. “While actual orders were in-line, seasonal adjustment provides a drag in February versus a boost in January,” said Vieth. He continued, “When seasonally adjusted, the net order volume drops to 21,450 units, down 11% compared to the seasonally adjusted January volume.”

Class 8 Orders Remain Strong: FTR

ACT and FTR reached slightly different numbers but the story was the same. FTR found February’s Class 8 net orders reached 22,900 units, “exceeding expectations for the second month in a row with strong y/y comparisons.” Orders rose five percent m/m and 28 percent y/y. What’s more, the steady increase in orders has now pushed backlog increases to over 100,000 units for the first time since June 2016.

February’s solid numbers keep the upward trend going that began last November. Not only that, market momentum is rising. FTR feels current order volumes should “enable production to hit or exceed Q2 forecasts.” Also, Class 8 orders for the past three months now annualize to 263,000 units.

“February was another very encouraging month for Class 8 truck orders, said Don Ake, FTR’s VP, Commercial Vehicles. “Orders have increased for four straight months, indicating the market is making a solid recovery after the second-half slump in 2016. This order cycle is much flatter and longer than usual, but this is a healthy order total for a February. March orders may not decline that much. This is what a turn around point looks like.”

“Freight is starting to pick again after sagging some in 2016. Rates are climbing and fleets are feeling much more confident about business going forward. Truck builds and sales should now begin a modest upturn which should continue throughout this year.”

January’s TCI Unchanged; Better Days Ahead

FTR’s January Trucking Conditions Index (TCI) came in at about December’s level: 2.7. But FTR expects January’s reading to be the year’s low point, with a “bounce” expected as 2017 moves along. “The election results have put the industry in an optimistic mood,” FTR noted, however, FTR cautions that “there are risks associated with some economic proposals being considered by the new administration and Congress.”

“It’s looking like 2017 will be a better year for the trucking industry,” said FTR’s COO Jonathan Starks. Starks added that the late recovery is “consumer driven, which is relatively light on increasing freight demand, but we will see modest growth. More importantly, the industry is really beginning to face up to the costs and changes from ELD implementation. We expect a productivity and capacity hit to the industry, though the effects will be felt differently, with early adopters ahead of the curve. One of the big issues we expect companies to continue to struggle with is the driver situation, with the number of new hires not keeping pace with overall demand for drivers. If capacity doesn’t meet demand, then truckers will be able to raise prices. However, we don’t expect to see that impact until late 2017, or into 2018.”

“We are also closely tracking government policies and actions,” Starks added. “The main concern continues to be the possibility of trade wars, which could have immediate and detrimental impacts on freight transportation.”

Nvidia/PACCAR Combine to Deliver Driverless Trucks

The race is on. Now companies are combining their respective strengths in their quest to develop driverless trucks. Consider the recently announced alliance between Nvidia and PACCAR. (We all know who PACCAR is; Nvidia manufactures graphics processor technologies for computing, consumer electronics, and mobile devices.)

The collaboration was announced by Nvidia’s CEO Jen-Hsun Huang, during his keynote at the Bosch ConnectedWorld conference in Berlin. Separately, he provided details of Nvidia’s partnership with Bosch, the world’s largest automotive supplier, on self-driving car technology.

“This is probably the largest single mass of a product that we’ve helped make,” said Huang, addressing a crowd of more than 2,000 executives, developers and others attending the event.

For its part, “PACCAR is exploring automated driving systems and we are excited about what our collaboration on artificial intelligence with Nvidia has delivered so far,” said PACCAR CEO Ron Armstrong.

PACCAR, manufacturer of the Kenworth, Peterbilt and the DAF lines of trucks has already developed a proof-of-concept, self-driving truck with SAE Level 4 capability. It’s built on NVIDIA DRIVE PX 2 technology, trained on deep neural networks. Level 4 capability is defined as a system that drives itself.

During his keynote, Huang showcased a video of a PACCAR semi-tractor trailer driving on a closed-course, handling a wide range of situations without a driver behind the wheel. The solution, the company claims, will improve driver productivity, enhance transportation efficiency and increase safety. The video noted the massive potential size of the market for self-driving trucks. There are currently 300 million trucks worldwide, driving over 1.2 trillion miles annually.
Volvo Trucks Uses Remote Programming to Boost Uptime and Efficiency

VTNA says that it’s expanding its connected vehicle services with new Remote Programming to “increase truck uptime, reduce downtime costs, and improve vehicle efficiency, all through powertrain software and parameter updates.”

Volvo explains that its Remote Programming leverages its factory-installed telematics hardware. It allows customers to conduct over-the-air powertrain software and parameter updates anywhere in the U.S. and Canada, as long as a cellular connection is available.

“Volvo Trucks continues to invest heavily in connectivity solutions, and we’re proud to bring a true over-the-air solution to market,” said Conal Deedy, Volvo’s director of connected vehicle services. “With Remote Programming, customers can quickly and easily perform updates to help improve the performance and efficiency of their vehicles.”

Thanks to Remote Programming, as Volvo explained in a media release, trucks no longer need to be removed from service and routed to a repair facility for certain powertrain software and parameter updates. Improving the availability of trucks equates to more money. Volvo has quantified that amount. On average, each additional day of uptime equates to about $1,100 in additional revenue. Additionally, those who have historically not performed software updates due to cost or inconvenience can quickly and easily keep their trucks operating at optimal performance.

The service will be available in the third quarter of 2017 for all Model Year 2018 Volvo trucks equipped with Volvo’s Remote Diagnostics hardware.

Mack Extends Uptime Commitment to "Legacy" Trucks

Mack Trucks announced that its “legacy vehicles,” not equipped with its GuardDog telematics hardware, can now reap the benefits of that technology. Mack’s working with Geotab, a global provider of end-to-end telematics technology, to enable connectivity for older Mack vehicles, helping to boost customer uptime.

“The benefits of Mack’s uptime solutions are proven, with significant reductions in diagnostic and repair times,” said David Pardue, Mack Trucks vice president of connected vehicles and uptime services. “We are pleased to partner with Geotab and offer those same benefits to customers who own Mack legacy vehicles.”

In a media release, Mack described how this would work.

- After installing a small Geotab telematics device, the Mack Uptime Center can monitor the same critical vehicle codes as Mack’s GuardDog Connect hardware.
- If an issue is detected, Mack OneCall™ agents will evaluate and provide the customer’s designated contact with “decision-critical information” through Mack ASIST, an online communications and service management portal.
- Repair scheduling, as well as parts and service bay availability, are also confirmed, all while the truck is still on the job.

Mack’s Uptime Center manages uptime support. Personnel from every customer support function are based in the Uptime Center, “enabling cross-functional teams to quickly and efficiently address customer issues impacting uptime.”

Mack’s GuardDog Connect service contact for legacy vehicles, which includes the Geotab vehicle tracking device, can be ordered through Mack dealers beginning May 1, 2017. It’s compatible with all model year 2011 and newer Mack vehicles equipped with Mack engines. Installation is plug-and-play, followed by a brief activation and on-boarding process.
UTA’s Managing for Success Seminar is a Winner

by Jody Johnson

The Used Truck Association (UTA) has been attempting to have a Management Training class for used truck managers, general managers, and dealer principals for about three years. While many of us have sent our salespeople to sales training, few of us have ever had any training in how to do a better job running a used truck operation.

We’re happy to say there’s now Managing for Success training and it’s a winner. I highly recommend this class to anyone who has a chance to take it. I am on the UTA Board of Directors, and co-chair the training committee with Amy Shahan. Since my wife and I had never attended any UTA management training sessions ourselves, we decided it was high time we did so.

We attended the February Management for Success Training Seminar at the Buttes Resort located in Tempe, Arizona. There were some 20 attendees, including used truck managers, finance managers, and even some aftermarket warranty people. Well-known industry vet George Papp led the seminar.

Before attending we had heard that George’s classes were first rate and first class. We were not disappointed! This class didn’t just focus on running a used truck department or store. It focused on really deep management techniques, which were of great value to everyone. My wife, who works performing interstate registrations, loved the class, and gained a lot of exceptional knowledge. Both of us have already started using the hiring part of George’s presentation.

George Papp teaches a great class with interactive discussions that we can all learn from. If you ever have attended one of his classes you know what I am talking about. If you haven’t attended one of his classes you owe it to yourself and your company to do so. It is an invaluable education just on the basics of running a business.

My wife and I both learned so much from the class we attended, we plan on sending our salespeople. Very few of us in our industry have ever attended a class like this, and we tend to learn by either watching others or from our mistakes as we go along. I highly recommend this class or the companion class “Selling for Success.” Please go to the UTA website www.UTA.org , and on the front page you can see the additional classes coming up.

Now we know from first-hand experience: Whenever you attend any of the UTA/George Papp classes you never leave without learning a wealth of information! ■

Jody Johnson is a UTA Board Member.

Save the Date!

Don’t just be there. Be a Sponsor!
Some months we sit and contemplate how we should close the newsletter with our little look-at-life feature article. Some months that requires a period of what we call “thumb sucking.” It’s not literally one of us sucking our thumb, not that there’s anything wrong with that, but it does require quiet contemplation and hope that creativity will strike, and an idea will spring into our heads. If a thumb makes that more likely, what’s the harm? Other times the creativity comes crashing right on in and makes itself known. This month the crashing was quite literal. On a quiet Friday evening I (Deb) went down into the kitchen to prepare a lovely little snack to complete our TV viewing for the evening. From nowhere visible, a bat swooped down and bounced off the crown of my head! It settled into an awkward stance clinging to the edge if the fourth step leading out of the kitchen.

The mammalian flight or fight response was immediate. I was ready to fight and unfortunately for the little brown bat, he was not able to take flight. By way of full disclosure, I’m not easily freaked out by interactions with nature. Aside from a severe case of arachnophobia, which honestly, brings me no pride, I am still a tomboy at heart. I know how beneficial little brown bats are, and I recognize how vulnerable their survival is in our part of the country. I only wish the best for the ones who live outside. But we’ve had more than a few outbreaks of rabies around here, and since this bat bounced off my head, I had no choice but to capture it and send it on for testing. Actually, I did have a choice, I could have just agreed to submit, along with all the others in my household, to a full round of rabies vaccines. A chorus of “I’m gonna get that bat!” started singing in my head. Fortunately, the bat seemed unable to take flight, either because of a damaged wing or, because he was too low to the ground to launch.

I called in reinforcements from the city boy who was upstairs. “I NEED THE BIG SHOEBOX YOU’LL FIND ON THE SUNPORCH!” I may have called calmly. This shrieking went back and forth up and down the stairs, maybe accompanied by a few words Mama never wanted her daughter to utter. Finally, I heard the aforementioned shoebox come bouncing down the front steps, and a bedroom door slam upstairs. Wrapping my head and neck in a towel, donning my father-in-law’s cast-off leather coat for armor, a straw hat to protect the bounced-upon crown of my head, and wearing Brad’s gloves, I approached my adversary. Then I remembered it’s really important to throw something over the critter to confuse it and isolate it. Not coincidentally one of Brad’s favorite shirts was nearby, and oh well, what’s a warrior princess supposed to do but reach for quick resources? The shirt went over the bat, the box went under the step, and the bat went into the box!

Two extra large and thick trash bags completed the package, and we called animal control to come pick up the pathetic bundle that we then left on the front porch. The danger was over for us, but the bat was setting out on his final trip to the state lab where he would be decapitated and tested for rabies. As much as I wanted this bat out of the house, I must admit, my heart ached for the pretty, beneficial little critter. He had simply made a mistake from which he couldn’t recover. That sympathy passed quickly when I went to get washed for bed, and I saw two tiny bloody scratches on my forehead. Now all my sympathy turned back to me!!!!!! He bounced off my head, but evidently grabbed on with tiny claws before continuing his journey. Now I had no choice but to start rabies vaccines as soon as possible. The next morning my primary care physician agreed, and off we went to the emergency room, which is the only place in our county that distributes the vaccine. I had five shots to start, plus one more to stop the terrible stomach upset that often accompanies the rabies shots. I have one more pending tomorrow. We should know by Wednesday if the bat was rabid or not.

I was hoping a negative result would mean the end of the shot regimen, but there’s some confusion about that. Either way, the shots are not as terrible as they used to be. The ER staff was very kind, and I certainly have made out much better than the poor little brown bat. And as for the city boy upstairs? Well, he did a great job gathering all the phone numbers we needed and getting all the treatment facts organized. Plus, he stayed with me the whole time I had to spend in the ER, never leaving my side once, that is once the bat was gone. We’ve always felt that the secret of our long and happy marriage is that each of us knows his/her customer. Each of us brings our own special talents to every challenge, and every now and again a favorite shirt goes the way of a doomed rodent! At least that’s the way it looks from where we sit.

Deb and Brad Schepp
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