

TACKLING TRUCKING'S MAINTENANCE CHALLENGES: A CONVERSATION WITH RANDY OBERMEYER

- Technology and Maintenance Council (TMC) Chairman Randy Obermeyer passes the baton to the incoming Chairman Todd Cotier on February 25.
- Obermeyer focused on compiling best practices for those at every level of the trucking industry, encouraging his network to pass along their experiences to help others. During his term, he focused heavily on technician recruitment and retention and sees signs of progress.
- As the immediate past chairman for the coming year, Obermeyer will remain heavily involved with the board. He hopes to increase TMC membership and create positive experiences for those new members.

In a time of immense transition for the trucking industry — from technological shifts to the move toward electric-powered trucks — significant changes can occur over the course of just a year. The breadth of change can make 12 months feel far longer than the actual time period.

But for the 2022-2023 chairman of the Technology and Maintenance Council (TMC), Randy Obermeyer, the past year has flown by. "It's been so much fun," he said of his tenure as chairman. "There's no other organization in the country or competitors [who] work together as hard as they do at TMC, and I'm so proud to be a part of that."

Since April 2021, Obermeyer has also served as the Vice President of Safety and Maintenance with Online Transport, a role that prepared him well for his position as chairman.

On an extended cut of the RoadSigns Podcast episode 105, TT's Michael Freeze spoke with Obermeyer about some of the major challenges facing the trucking industry, his experience as TMC chair, and his hopes for the future of TMC.

Strengthening the industry through sharing knowledge

During his time as TMC chairman, which began in March 2022, Obermeyer sought to compile core knowledge from across the industry in order to benefit technicians and fleet managers alike.

More than anything, Obermeyer focused on building a network of people who could contribute to recommended industry-wide practices. “Anytime you [can] provide information to make companies better, I think it helps,” he said.

Obermeyer’s greatest passion is sharing collective knowledge across the industry. Top experts didn’t start out with that level of knowledge — they benefitted from learning from others, which is why Obermeyer encourages industry veterans to pass along their experiences to others.

“We need you to share your knowledge with the people that are just getting started in the industry: technicians, managers, anybody you can talk to. Make them more knowledgeable so that we make the industry better,” Obermeyer said.

Technician recruitment and retention

When Obermeyer came into his position last year, technician retention and recruitment were pressing topics on his radar.

It is an area in which he has witnessed progress during his time as chairman and looking ahead, he believes there’s reason to be optimistic.

“Every year, we naturally get better at it,” he said. “Everybody understands that, if we’re going to be a prosperous industry, we [have] to have people that can fix our trucks and get them back out on the road.”

One noteworthy recruitment and retention strategy is hosting events like the annual Tech Skills Rodeo, which is organized by Rush Enterprises Inc. The challenge invites truck technicians to show off their skills as they compete for prizes and recognition — and the event builds industry pride along the way.

In response to widespread truck technician turnover, Rush Enterprises CEO W. M. “Rusty” Rush has also cited training programs as a driver of retention, which he says is one of the biggest obstacles in the trucking technician sector.

Obermeyer partnered with industry leaders like Chris Spear, president and CEO of the American Trucking Association, to address technician recruitment and retention. Spear has helped TMC to spread the word about ways to improve technician retention across the industry.

The honor of serving as chairman

One of the greatest privileges of Obermeyer’s time as chairman has been the industry connections he’s made.

“Being able to talk to people that are vice presidents and major players in the industry, and have conversations with them, to me, is huge for personal growth,” he said.

During his incoming chairman speech, he recalled the struggle of speaking to customers when he was working at a gas station in the full-service line. He was just 18 years old at the time.

"I would just walk up to a window and stand there, [waiting] for them to tell me what they wanted — I couldn't get it out of my mouth to ask if I could help them," he said.

But that reality is worlds away from the Obermeyer of today, who confidently delivers speeches to a crowd of hundreds. He says the public speaking aspect of the role has been one of the most rewarding parts of his time as chairman.

In the past, Obermeyer aspired to the kind of professional accomplishments he's now achieved and looked up to industry leaders who are now his peers. "Now I know I am one of them," he said.

The road ahead: looking to the future

Obermeyer said that his predecessor, Stacy Earnhardt, gave him the same advice perhaps every TMC chairman would offer those that follow — including Obermeyer himself.

"Don't blink because if you do, it's over. It goes by so fast — enjoy it, take it in, and get as much out of it as you can," Obermeyer said.

He has a strong relationship with incoming Chairman Todd Cotier — the two became friends several years ago.

"He's been involved in this industry, so he doesn't need any advice from me," Obermeyer said, although he noted that will be glad to help Cotier however possible. "He's been learning, he has been waiting ... to get this opportunity, and trust me, he's ready."

As for what's next for Obermeyer, he will remain heavily involved in the boardroom of TMC in the year ahead, serving as immediate past chairman. This role will afford him more time to support TMC task forces. He plans to continue the agenda he started as chairman, focused on developing a recommended practice for root cause analysis for fleet maintenance operations.

Obermeyer also wants to focus on the future of TMC and to support those that are in a similar position to where he started years ago.

"[I want to] try to build up membership and do anything I can to give back to the people that have helped me and give to the people who don't even know what they're missing yet," Obermeyer said.

He wants to make every TMC member's first meeting a positive experience. Plus, he hopes that some of them will set their sights on becoming general chairman — just like he did 17 years ago.

This article is based on an episode of *Roadsigns*, a podcast exploring the trends and technologies that are shaping the future of trucking. [Check out the website to catch past and future episodes.](#)