

SAFETY SPOTLIGHT

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The "Safety Spotlight" feature of The Green Light shines the spotlight on safety professionals to gain insight into their background, and their thoughts and ideas on safety in our industry.

Meet Layn Muller, responsible for Safety for C2C Express, a dry goods haulers based in Sioux City, Iowa. C2C joined the Alliance Interstate Risk program in February 2023 and Layn's dedication to safety and the AIR Risk Management model has been obvious from day one. Layn joined C2C in August 2012 as a company driver and, in 2016, took over duties in not just safety, but HR, maintenance, payroll, recruiting, customer relations and much more...



How did you get started in Safety? What advice do you wish you had received early in your career in Safety that you would pass on to someone just getting started?

I've held many roles and have worn many hats, but I started as the very first C2C company driver. I never imagined how far the career path would take me and the opportunities I've had to grow personally and professionally. "If it's worth doing; it's worth doing right." I can hear my grandfather's voice from when I was a kid helping him process newspapers in his garage, getting up the next day at 3:00am to deliver said newspapers. If I had known in 2012 what I know now about safety, I would have focused on being a *Professional Driver* rather than just a *driver*. The distinction between the two is other-worldly in terms of not only safety but our company's brand, the brand of the companies we represent, the general public's safety, service, customer interactions, equipment expectations, and overall compliance. Driving is a job worth doing, and it's worth doing right; as a *Professional*.

What do you view as the main duties of a Safety professional?

Coaching is an essential skill at every level of safety. In any conversation it is important to acknowledge what a person is experiencing, then unveil what they're missing and need to focus on. It's easier said than done, because how you break through to one person can be polar opposite for the next. If you can coach in this manner, it distinguishes who will sink or who will swim, not only within the responsibilities of the person being coached but our own responsibilities as industry leaders. It is our role as safety advocates to enable somebody to tackle a situation head on without losing sight of doing it safely. Anybody can get a task completed, but subsequently harm themselves or somebody else in the process. A professional won't allow that to happen.

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What has been the most challenging task in your role/career as a Safety professional?

Suspending or terminating an employee for infractions that are perceived as common practice or routine oversight. People working in our industry are aware of the risk on the job, but managing and preventing incidents is what differentiates anybody off the street from a professional.

What do you find most effective in getting existing and new truck drivers to buy in to Safety?

My boss, Callin, is the type of person who creates a contagious culture everybody wants to be a part of, and I've learned from him that the first step is buying into safety yourself. If you're bought into safety, you can encourage other people to be a part of what you're doing. The best way for a driver to buy into safety is when they truly understand how crucial it is for not just them to return home to their families unscathed, but (more importantly) everybody they crossed paths with as well. They understand that being a professional isn't just a title, it's the way of doing the job... while not endangering themselves or everybody around them.

How is safety important to you and how do you (or would you) improve your company's safety culture?

Make being safe on the front of everybody's mind. It's easy to brush safety off or make it an afterthought, but it's the first thing that's discussed post-incident. That's why it needs to be taken seriously and at the front of anybody's mind, all the time. I have my pilot's license. In general aviation, a pilot's license is considered a "license to learn". It is the very first step in something much larger. From the very start, talking about the bad things that can happen is the first conversation piece to any subject. I wholeheartedly think professional driving is missing what aviation is doing right. If an airplane goes down, the NTSB makes a very thorough report of what happened and how it could have been avoided. These reports are shared with aviators and manufactures to make sure the same mistakes do not happen again. When a professional sees a truck in the ditch on its side, they consider how or why the incident happened and what could have been done differently to avoid the same fate.

What would be your safety quote or message?

"There's never accidents, only negligence" requires a person to own their mistake. Everyone who acknowledges this statement shifts their mindset to *"it is our duty to be safe."*