

## PRESENTING TRUCKING'S TEAM CANADA: 2014-VERSION

*They're fast thinkers, good hearted and ready to make the tough decisions.*

# 20 UNDER 40

PROFILES BY TODAY'S TRUCKING STAFF

**T**he rules are simple. We simply put word out that we're looking for young (ish) leaders.

Throughout the calendar year, *Today's Trucking's* staff—editors, reporters, sales reps, basically anybody who comes in contact with our readers, plus our friends, contacts and contributors—watch for new candidates for the annual **20-Under-40** feature.

We suss out truck shows, show & shines, association conferences and truck stops. We ask at fleet events.

Indeed, one of this year's candidates first met *Today's Trucking's* Editor **Peter Carter** at a wedding in Winnipeg. He identified himself as a reader and seemed to be very enthusiastic about his career. Carter contacted the young man's supervisor, and she agreed: David Wilson is one to watch. (See "Dirt Roads Scholar," pg. 41.)

We always end up with more than 20 so we have to make judgment calls. Of course most candidates are young enough that they will be eligible next year. Plus we do our best to cross the country, to offer a truly pan-Canadian perspective. Trucking is nothing if not a seedbed for diversity.

Cultural differences notwithstanding, after we compile our 20 and assess the roster, we invariably realize that they share certain attributes: They all love trucking. They all have ideas they're eager to share with their colleagues, and they're all optimistic.

A few trends worth noting: As with most fields of endeavor, there are lots more university-educated people going into trucking these days. They're a well-travelled bunch and they're also very community minded. On the East Coast, you'll meet the Armours ("Suited For Armour," pg. 39) who are doing their best to revitalize the Maritimes economy, and in B.C., there's Jared Bragg ("Bulking Up in B.C.," pg. 39) who wants to let the world know our left-coast province is "open for business."

We think as you get to know these 20 leaders, you'll feel good about the future of trucking in this country. It's in good hands.

P.S. The project is largely quarterbacked by our own very capable Under-40 achiever, *Today's Trucking's* 23-year-old Associate Editor **Teona Baetu**. If you've any recommendations for next year's team, contact her at [Teona@newcom.ca](mailto:Teona@newcom.ca).

## Jonathan Wahba



When **Jonathan Wahba** was 31, he was named Vice President and General Manager of **Schneider National's Canadian** division, which meant, he was in charge of about 500 staff.

Before that, the Queen's University Political Science grad worked for CN as part of a team that, in addition to other projects, successfully promoted the Prince Rupert Port to international customers.

After three years at Schneider, Wahba saw that the only way up in the company

### Kriska Wiz Kid

would involve a move to its Green Bay Wisc., headquarters. By that time, he and his wife Erin had a family (they now have four children—Ethan, Sophie, Jacob and Carter); and they decided they would prefer to stay near their family support back in Canada.

Fortunately, Wahba had met Prescott-, ON-based **Kriska** President Mark Seymour at an Ontario Trucking Association (OTA) event. Seymour lured him to Kriska.

Wahba says Kriska's culture—with the emphasis on safety as well its low driver turnover—appealed to him as did the challenges faced by a middle-sized Canadian carrier. Growth was a must but the means to growth was unclear.

In 2013, he signed on as Kriska's Chief Operating Officer, joining President Seymour and CFO Pierre Carrier.

"I saw the opportunity to work with Mark and Pierre, and Mark doesn't want to grind it out every day and I do want to grind it out everyday.

"I also felt the company could use some of the discipline around sales that Schneider has, plus we had that family culture." It wasn't long until he started making a name for himself. Most recently, he helped Kriska partner with Murray Mullen to form a new holding company, Kriska Transportation, a hybrid uniting Kriska with The Mullen Group's Mill Creek.

It was the largest acquisition in Kriska's 35-year-history.

## Heather Day



**Heather Day**, 34, says when she and her kid sister Andrea were little, they talked about what they wanted to do as grown-ups.

The decision was easy. Andrea couldn't stand the smell of diesel. She's now living in Australia.

And big sis Heather runs the 78-year-old family company, **C.S. Day Transport**, based in Regina.

Her grandfather Chester started hauling fuel in 1936 and over the years and generations C.S. Day veered into other commodities including food and feed but has since reined itself back into the fuel business.

Day runs 19 day cabs, with two shifts, and all drivers are company employees.

"I don't actually have an official job title; I do most of the HR stuff; and financial management; strategic planning, I talk to customers and I oversee training and safety programs."

While *Today's Trucking* was preparing this list of 20 Under 40 trucking industry

### Dad's Doing Her Mat Leave

achievers, Day was actually on maternity leave tending to baby Amelia, who arrived Aug. 2,

and, she reports that her father (founder Chester's son) Dennis was filling in for her at work. That did not stop her from dropping in to the office to ensure things were running smoothly.

And although she figured from her youth that trucking was her destiny, Day left the field for a few years, to earn two degrees in music and teach school for eight years in England, which is where she met her husband Dan Grand.

Day, active in the Saskatchewan Trucking Association (STA) as her dad and grandfather were, is also emblematic of many of the new people entering the driver ranks. Although C.S. Day has low driver churn, Day says that a lot of the younger entrants to the ranks are coming from other careers, such as finance and teaching.

## Eric Carusi



### The Ritz Cracker Effect

When **Eric Carusi**, 30, was promoted to General Manager of **T.P.T. Systems**, he had 84 drivers. So the first thing he did was hold 84, one-on-one, face-to-face meetings.

"About 40 percent of our employees have been here at least eight years. So it's important to hear their input," Carusi says.

Plus, he says that understanding and relating to people is crucial to good leadership.

It's a lesson he learned while camping through remote areas of Africa.

"Before going to Zimbabwe I was told food is scarce there, so I bought 10 days' worth," he says.

But then Carusi met a man who made \$7.00 per month and had a family of eight to support.

"He told me that he's healthy, has a job and a roof over his head, so he has everything he needs," Carusi recalls.

"That really changes your perspective."

Carusi gave the man the remaining eight days' worth of food.

"I ate nothing but Ritz crackers and peanut butter for the next eight days," Carusi laughs.

Scott Cober, who works with Carusi, says: "Eric has a leadership quality that is not normally seen at his age. It's reassuring to see the next generation be passionate and professional about the evolving changes affecting the North American transportation industry."

Carusi credits his family and especially his uncle Frank and his father Joe for both his personal and the company's success. He is now General Manager of TransPro Group of Companies and is part of the Toronto Transportation Club, the Ontario Trucking Association and Toronto Trucking Association, to name a few of the organizations he lends his support to.

## Melanie Hamel



We caught up with **Melanie Hamel** as she was heading out for a walk with her young son Brady.

"Where," we asked, "did the name Brady come from?"

Without hesitation, Hamel responded: "Tom. The New England Patriot."

Kind of makes you want to meet her, doesn't it?

Hamel joined her father Bob Gauthier's Cornwall-ON-based **Seaway Express** after earning a journalism degree at Carleton University in Ottawa. She insists there's no disconnect between being a professional communicator and a trucking-fleet manager.

"Being able to communicate clearly and concisely is extremely important; and that includes listening to what people are concerned about."

"Especially when it comes to introducing new technologies or regulations."

Seaway itself does trucking differently than most other firms. Hamel's father opened the LTL carrier 24 years ago.

As his company grew, so has his city's reputation as a distribution hub for eastern Canada. And because Seaway's HQ is adjacent to some of the biggest distribution centers in the province—including Walmart, Target and soon to be Loblaw's—Seaway morphed into a middle-agent trucker. Scores of other fleets who would otherwise be subject to expensive and inconvenient appointments at the big DCs leave their freight with Seaway which in turn keeps the appointments and makes sure the docks are busy at the right times.

As the company grows; so does what Hamel calls her "Rah! Rah! Cornwall" activity. "From a business perspective, supporting the local chamber of commerce provides networking opportunities. I also believe it's important to support the community in which you and your colleagues live."