



A CASE STUDY IN CREATING A NEW SOLUTION FOR AN OLD PROBLEM

Pam Martinez, Vice President
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Introduction: As presented by Pam Martinez, DATTCO
[\(WIB Presentation Recording\)](#)

The bus and motor coach industry has long struggled with retaining bus drivers year-over-year. Magnified by a post COVID environment, we were even more concerned about our existing drivers returning to work. We decided to offer a retention bonus to focus on our existing employees who were coming in everyday verses a signing bonus to bring on new employees.

Background

Our retention bonus is meant for a School Bus driver after a lay-off period but can be used for any type driver including paratransit and motorcoach. We offered the retention bonus at some locations, not all. For the payout terms we used driving days in lieu of calendar days in case school was shut down due to unforeseen reasons such as a pandemic or weather which allowed flexibility. Establishing payout criteria is critical.

To Be Qualified:

- Must have worked the prior school year
- Must be present on the first day of school

Payout

- ½ paid out after working 45 driving days
- 2nd ½ paid out after an additional 45 driving days

Results: Metric show significant reduction in turnover with better retention!

Locations Eligible for a Bonus

10 Locations offered a bonus and lost **20 LESS people** than the prior year

- 4 out of 10 had better retention
- 2 stayed the same

- 4 were worse (only slightly)

Locations without a Bonus

12 Locations did not offer bonus and lost **38 MORE** people than the year before

- 0 out of 12 had better retention
- 3 stayed the same
- 9 were worse

Recommendations

- Assess your current staff and possible resignations
- Develop a plan that works for your company, geographic area, and your budget
- Communicate and promote the plan
- Make it beneficial to both the employee and company
- Company size doesn't matter, tailor a program to meet your needs

Key takeaway

Retaining employees saves the company more money than hiring new ones and will increase employee satisfaction.



A CASE STUDY IN TRANSFORMING AN EXISTING PROGRAM INTO A WOW PROGRAM

Pam Martinez, Vice President
Human Resources & Risk Management



Introduction: As presented by Pam Martinez, DATTCO
[\(WIB Presentation Recording\)](#)

The bus and motor coach industry has long struggled with recruiting bus drivers. Our company used a recruiting contest to boost our existing referral bonus program.

Background

Our company needed to hire 90 School Bus Drivers and an additional 90 monitors in five months for a new contract. We held an internal contest with our employees to increase the number of new applicants. We ran the contest at two locations

- Over a 2 month period
- Winner must have a minimum of four referral candidates for the contest to pay out
- Payout needed to have a “wow” factor
- \$1,000 per referral (current program) plus \$5,000 for the winner!
- Winner of the contest would receive a minimum of \$9,000 (based on min 4 referrals)

Results

High-energy, local manager ran the contest with the freedom to be creative in the execution of the contest and the materials needed to be successful. We received **23 Referrals** within **2 months** from a possible 52 drivers. We also saw the following results:

- Employees asked for Yard Signs to put on their lawns and personalized it with their own names. (A sign the manager created to promote the contest at work)
- Employees asked for signs for their cars
- Employees were posting on social media
- Employees were calling people they knew from other companies

- Employees were using referral forms made up by the Company (Another creative solution by our local manager)

Recommendation

- Create a contest that has a “**WOW**” Factor
- This will be different for each company
- Is there currently a program in place? Make it a “**WOW**” program
- What dollar value creates a “**WOW**” program for your Company?
- Communicate the contest and promote it throughout the entire contest timeframe.
- Create excitement with the employees
- Provide the “tools” and the freedom to make it their own
- Use this case study as a guide and tailor it to fit your company’s size, needs and financial situation. This can be done on a smaller scale with smaller prizes and payouts
- Having a champion of the program is important to push and promote the program

Key Takeaway

Use your company’s greatest assets, employees, to be your billboard and spokesperson. Create a buzz amongst employees and make it a fun event for staff to participate and show their company pride.



A CASE STUDY IN RESHAPING A COMPANY CULTURE

Gregory S. Hendricks,
Director of Safety & Compliance



Introduction: As presented by Greg Hendricks, Salt Lake Express
(WIB Presentation Recording)

Company Culture is one of the best ways to improve your driver talent pool and to retain your existing drivers. Understanding your perceived company culture and your willingness to reshape existing culture are critical to your success in this area.

Background

Without fully understanding why, we were experiencing problems in recruiting and retaining drivers. Even though we offered unrealistic sign-on bonuses and offered raises to any driver that complained, we still experienced a high driver turnover rate.

Drivers created a narrative that fostered a toxic culture. Although it was narrative that was not true, management delayed in addressing concerns head on, and the rumors began to spread among employees and our potential hiring pool. What we missed was that rumors feed actions, negative or positive, and the negative rumors almost became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Once management heard that the rumors started to include safety concerns, which is always a top priority, it was time to take immediate actions. Here is what we did:

- Asked for outside help
 - Insurance provider gave us their unique perspective on culture through statistics
 - Asked for public opinion from the community and past clients
- Admit the problem to all employees and ask for their help and feedback
- Admit and recognize that you may be the enabler of this toxic culture
- Began to hold semi-annual (paid) driver meetings
- Perform exit interviews and calling past employees
- Overall, we engaged and empowered employees to have a voice at the table

Results

- Prior to action, our turnover rate was approximately 65%.
- Our current rate is 29%, including seasonal employees
- Added benefit per million miles
 - 9.58 accidents per million miles in 2019
 - 7.64 accidents per million miles in 2020

Recommendation

What we learned

- Keeping the status quo can create or enable a toxic culture.
- People just want to be heard. You may get ten bad ideas for every good idea, but you will get good feedback. Listen, track feedback, and take action
- Pay is not the main motivator of people
- Culture comes from the top down
- Address concerns fast in a passionate way to resolve employee issues

Changes we made

- Inform drivers about profit/loss, ridership, major expenses such as insurance, repair costs...
- Eliminated drivers that fostered the toxic culture and could not be coached to change.
- Make the on boarding process more robust. Really spend time sharing with the applicant what makes your company unique. Share the company's values, and culture, during the interview.
- Put TV's in every driver's room and have a fresh presentation playing each week
 - Highlight a different driver each week. Highlight company news. Share great reviews.

Key Takeaway

- Step 1: Ask drivers about your culture. What do they like? What would they want changed?
- Step 2: Conduct exit interview (recent / past)
- Step 3: Analysis of info for actions / trends
- Step 4: Make changes – Your company will be more successful' and you will be more successful.

"Make the company you work for, the company you want to work for."



A CASE STUDY IN MOTIVATING EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR TO MEET BUSINESS NEEDS

Jack Kaufman
Vice President of Operations



Introduction: As presented by Jack Kaufman
[\(WIB Presentation Recording\)](#)

In order to recruit and retain drivers, we need to make them feel valuable. Drivers are the face of our company. “Treat people like they make a difference, and they will.”

Background

As our Company shifted business priorities, we needed our drivers to shift with us and own the changes.

- Our company experienced growth during COVID as we diversified our business model from a Tour company to executive employee shuttles
- We needed to go outside the norm to recruit drivers and then needed to keep them
- We needed to find a way to recruit drivers outside of our immediate geographical area

What we did:

- Provide family-like environment – a balance between a business and a family work environment
- Drivers were Friends and one was a teacher
- Built apartments above garage to support employee commuters
- Built driver room stocked with food and drinks
- Donuts for our shuttles
- Social Media presence – Others “see” how happy our drivers are

Results

We learned that money is not always everything. If you treat people with respect and give them a good work environment, they will do the same for you and your business. Driver’s opinions and complaints are important requiring attention and changes.

Recommendation

- Increase perks when possible i.e. company benefits, pay, and amenities
- Understand what makes each driver happy and wanting to come to work each day
- Client-driven or management “good job” \$5 gift cards. “Making a driver feel like a million bucks costs us \$5.”

Key Takeaway

Money is not the number one factor for employee satisfaction. Employees want to feel a valued part of a team. Treat employees as an extension of your family and focus on what you can do to keep them engaged.