

Hiring Essentials for Your Transportation Business



DRIVERS DEPOT

No matter how small your transportation business starts out, you may find a time when you need to hire help. Perhaps you start with subcontractors who take up the slack when you have more jobs than you can handle. Maybe you hire a part-time driver who allows you to not drive on Fridays so you can get office work done or ensure some family time. But if you expand enough, you'll end up with employees, whether they're drivers or a bookkeeper or a scheduler or whatever peripheral duties need to be done to keep your business going.

Choosing employees -- whether temporary or permanent -- can be a deal maker, or breaker, for your growing company. You need a reliable team around you. Someone, whether yourself, a permanent staff member, or a temporary employee, will be needed to fill each of the following roles:

- *Office manager.* Handles administrative, clerical, and office-supply duties like answering the phones, keeping the office neat and tidy, filing, and perhaps even coordinating employees.
- *Sales staff.* Someone whose job it is to find business and market your service.
- *Director of marketing.* In a small shop, this could be the salesperson's role as well -- taking care of advertising and promotion, and getting timely publicity to the media.
- *Bookkeeper.* Tracks all business expenses, and may also prepare tax returns. If you hire an accountant to do some of the higher-level finance-related tasks, you may be able to do the bookkeeping yourself.

Note that the above list is about roles, not titles. There is considerable variety in titles given to employees, but whether you use informal titles or more formal ones, the tasks are the same. Also don't feel like you absolutely need to hire a separate employee for each of these duties. It's more likely that you end up fulfilling all or most of these duties yourself.

Reaching Out to Candidates

Once you've determined the type of positions you need to fill, you will need to advertise these open positions. Don't skimp on this step. Cast your net as widely as possible to garner the best employees.

Advertising

Consider placing an advertisement in your local and regional newspapers. If the job you're filling is a more senior-level position in your transportation business, then also consider advertisements in larger newspapers as well as trade journals. These national ads, though, will be much more expensive, so plan on placing national ads only when the position warrants. National searches will likely attract candidates who'll need to relocate so their salary expectations may also be higher in order to warrant a move.

Here are additional venues in which to advertise your job availability:

- *Online newspaper advertising.* Check with the advertising representative at your local paper to see if the newspaper offers an online option. Most newspapers offer packages, including print only, online only, or both types of advertising. If the newspaper offers an online option, plan on placing an online as well as a print version of your advertisement.
- *Online job sites.* Online employment advertising on sites such as www.Craigslist.com and www.Monster.com is booming. However, you really are pulling in a national audience whether or not you intend to - - make it clear in your ad where the job is located to weed out far-flung candidates who will likely not be moving 1,500 miles to take the job you have to offer paying \$14 per hour.
- *Colleges and universities.* Colleges and universities often have their own newspapers as well as websites on which you can post your job openings. This is an excellent source for finding able candidates, especially for less-senior positions.
- *Word of mouth.* Word of mouth is often invaluable in finding key employees. Let your vendors know that you are looking for employees.

One thing that's important to note: When 2016 started, truck drivers looking for jobs were literally in the driver's seat when it came to employment - there weren't enough drivers for the amount of trucking that happens in this country on a daily basis. Keep abreast of the employment situation in your industry so you won't be taken by surprise when you need someone and no one wants your job.

Interviewing

As you begin hearing from prospective applicants, you'll want to read through their resumes and create a point system, perhaps from 1 to 10, giving 1s to unqualified candidates and 10s to top candidates. If you wrote an accurate job description, you shouldn't have many 1s. Nor should you have many 10s -- dream candidates are rare. As you survey the resumes, use your rating system to decide which applicants to interview.

Interviewing Strategies

Plan on interviewing five to ten applicants for more senior positions, fewer for less senior openings. When an applicant arrives for an interview, have them complete an application form. You'll want to ask all candidates the same series of questions, ensuring a fair process. For help in formulating these questions, check www.job-Interview.net. This site offers tips and advice about job interviewing and appropriate questions. Also contact your industry's trade association, which might be able to offer questions that would be applicable to your specific transportation business.

Take notes during interviews so you can review them later and winnow your candidates to two finalists. Ask these two back for a second interview. Take notes so you can access responses of both candidates after the interviews and make a final selection.

After the second interview, you'll need to write an offer letter to the winning candidate, laying out your proposal, complete with pay structure and benefits. Once you and the applicant have signed the letter, you should let the other finalist know that the position is filled. Wait until the winning applicant has formally accepted before letting the losing candidate know the bad news. Too many times, the winning candidate will decline the offer, and you'll want to be able to turn to your second candidate.

Pay

There are many variables to consider when paying your staff. For instance, in more urban areas of the country, pay tends to be higher. Compensation is also based on the employee's experience and amount of responsibility. According to a 2015 report by www.CNN.com, "The median annual wage for a trucker who works for a private fleet, such as a truck driver employed by Walmart, is \$73,000 according to ATA [American Trucking Association]. The Labor Department pegs the median annual salary for all truck drivers at around \$40,000."

Training

If you're hiring drivers, you'll likely be hiring someone who has at least gone through truck driving school or has a commercial license for the specific kind of driving needed for your business. The larger trucking companies have their own schools.

Beyond that, you still need to think about training your employees, whether they're rookie drivers just out of school or bookkeepers or schedulers. These employees need to keep abreast of the latest trends in the transportation industry and know how to use the most up-to-date tools to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.

Be a good boss and take the time to adequately train your new hires, and give them the benefit of the doubt for getting quickly up to speed. When they arrive for their first day of work, show them how you like things done, where the things are that they need to perform the job they were hired to do, and the basics of your operation. There's simply nothing more frustrating for a new employee than being left to flounder. Plan on providing each employee with a detailed job description, delineating his or her responsibilities. And introduce new employees to everyone in the company so they meet the new crew of people they'll be working with.