Recruiting & Retaining Bus Operators

APTA Emerging Leaders
Group 1
Our Team

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Presentation Overview

The Issues
Recruitment
Retention

Survey
Methodology
Findings

Industry Case Studies
Orange County Transit Authority
Regional Transportation District, Denver

Recommendations
Recruiting / Retaining
Career Growth Opportunities

Conclusion
Next Steps
Retention Issues

- Low wages and benefit packages offered
- Lack of consistent hours and shifts
- Part time vs. full time opportunities
- Absence of career planning/ training for existing operators
- Driver safety

Recruitment Issues

- Perception of transit industry
- Stigma of bus operator profession
- Low unemployment rates
- Lack of diversity
- Barriers created by federal and state regulations
Methodology

50 SURVEYS COMPLETED AT ROUTEMATCH USER CONFERENCE

LEVERAGED MENTORS TO INTERVIEW SEVERAL HIGH LEVEL EXECUTIVES.

FOCUSED ON TWO TRANSIT AGENCIES AS CASE STUDIES

RESEARCHED SCHOLARLY ARTICLES
Survey Findings: Successful Recruitment Strategies

- Incorporate multiple media platforms
- Referral / sign on bonuses
- Competitive pay and benefits package
- Customer Service Skill: Set vs Driving Experience
- Partner with local veteran organizations in the community
Survey Findings: Successful Retention Strategies

- Employee Appreciation Events
- Bonus Reward Program (Longevity, Safety)
- Flexible Schedules Rotating Weekends
- Professional Development Training
- Open Communication Between Management and Operators
Case Studies
Orange County Transportation Authority

Challenges
- Not keeping up with and planning for retirements
  - Turnover spike trend in March due to popular retirement time
- Contracting out service
  - Competition with partners to recruit drivers
- Understaffing
  - Trainers and supervisors being used to operate buses
  - Scheduled overtime high
Where can your career take you?

Becoming an OC Bus Driver is your chance to discover a lifelong career. With excellent pay, benefits, and room to grow, it could be your path to success. Hourly wages start at $18.25.

A role with purpose

As an OC Bus Driver, you’re an important part of what keeps Orange County moving. Each day, you’ll help residents and visitors reach their destinations safely—providing reliable transportation that enhances the quality of life for our community.

Choose from full and part-time positions.

APPLY NOW
## Case Studies

**Orange County Transportation Authority**

### Recruitment Efforts
- Entirely new website just for drivers – [ocbus.com/careers](ocbus.com/careers)
  - Video interviews with drivers
  - Wages and benefits advertised
  - Job comparisons with competitors
  - Career and wage growth opportunities
  - Social media presence

### Employee Referral Program
- #1 Source of high yield quality drivers
  - Outreach materials for employees to disperse in their communities

- Employment Advertising
  - Buses wrapped with pictures of bus drivers
  - “Now Hiring” advertised on headway signs
Case Studies
Orange County Transportation Authority

**Retention Efforts**
- Improving quality of life in employees
  - Robust wellness program
  - Gyms on site – staffed with trainers
- Behavioral interviews
- Mentorship program
- Promoting internally
  - 80% of bus operations management team began careers as OC Bus Drivers

**Results**
- 100 Bus Drivers recruited with 68 Drivers passing certification
  - Last year, of 61 Driver hired, 35 Drivers made it through training
Case Studies
Regional Transportation District

Challenges

- Behind the market in wages offered
- Low labor pool due to low unemployment rate
- Increasing Hispanic population – language barrier
- Undesirable shift for employees with less seniority
Case Studies
Regional Transportation District

Recruitment and Retention Efforts

• Worked with collective bargaining units to increase wages
• Initiated Leadership Academy open for all employees
• Created Professional Development and Education fund to take course
• Reduced split shifts by 5%
• Implemented premium pay for split shifts
• Hired bilingual HR representative
• Advertised jobs in English and Spanish
• Offered English language courses to employees
# Recommendations To Agencies

## Celebrate drivers early and often
- Celebrate operators publicly
- Press releases of operators helping and supporting community
- Parties, bonuses, tokens of appreciation

## Provide work life balance support
- Wellness programs and onsite gyms
- Childcare onsite or through local businesses
- Decrease of part time and split shifts

## Create a mentorship program
- Pair junior operators with senior dispatchers or planners

## Take advantage of a diverse labor pool
- Tailor recruitment efforts to local demographics
- Leverage local veteran organizations
- Take advantage of local institutions

## Driver Safety
- CCTV
- Glass door between driver and passengers
- Off board payment
Leadership and Development Programs Successfully Build Skills For Opportunities
Program open to all employees at all levels
Identify and train potential management candidates early

Create Individualized Development Plans For Potential Candidates
Cross-functional training / assignments
Stretch assignments
Mentor relationships

Incentivize By Adjusting Pay Barriers
Ensure pay differential between entry level management position and top tier operator with overtime

Recommendations To Agencies: Opportunities to Promote Operators to Management
Thanks!

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