

North America

Taking the lead

As our North American division expands its operations, we are focused on growing our team to ensure we have a sufficient leadership talent in place to ensure continued progress. During 2005 we started to define our leadership requirements and implement a coaching programme down to the General Manager level. We have also commenced succession mapping for managers.

Fulfilling potential

With more than 85% of employees working part time, the central challenge for our North American school bus operations is to ensure that all our drivers are clear about their roles. Typically, a driver is a young mother with children or a retired worker who is looking for a part time role. Most drivers work split shifts to meet the morning and afternoon requirements of the job.

Driver support is an important aspect of the business and we ensure that all employees have a point of contact through which they can gain advice or raise issues. This is particularly vital for new drivers. (See case study opposite).

Our commitment to training begins on day one. New employees immediately embark on a course to gain their school bus driving licence as well as an orientation programme which builds awareness of our management philosophy.

Each year we recruit for the new school year. We successfully attract back a high percentage of employees year after year. As well as their contracted hours, many drivers work additional hours to cover extra routes or charter trips which help build our business.

During 2005, driver retention across the division improved with an 8% increase at Durham School Services and 5% at Stock Transportation.

Coaching is positively encouraged and every full time employee has at least 60 minutes of formal coaching each month. We believe that this focus on the individual plays a vital role in enhancing our leadership pool. We aim to roll-out further our coaching programme.

Employee satisfaction is monitored through annual audits, with feedback provided to local facilities and compared against internal peer groups.

We support equal opportunities across our business and despite monitoring of diversity being restricted in Canada, we ensure the employee base fairly reflects the make up of the location. Within the United States, Federal reporting of diversity is required and annual affirmative action plans are developed to address areas for improvement.

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Offering new benefits to attract and retain employees

In a competitive job market, Durham School Services (Durham) has launched a new initiative to attract and retain the high quality employees that the business requires in order to provide enhanced services to customers.

Although a number of Durham's competitors offer a benefits package, as do those in similar sectors, these were neither extensive nor totally cost-effective. It became clear to our management team that an enhanced comprehensive, low-cost package would provide Durham with an important point of differentiation – giving current and potential employees an additional reason to be part of the Durham team.

Rapid take-up Through an independent broker, Durham negotiated a set of benefits which could be offered to employees at significant discount. And in July 2005, the company introduced a new package for all employees with effect from 1 September 2005. Under the new scheme, Durham pays the scheme's administrative costs and employees who wish to purchase benefits have deductions made from their salaries.

The advantages include a prescription drugs benefit, life insurance, health value benefits and 'US Now' hospital medical plans which provide benefits for doctor visits, wellness, in-hospital stays, intensive care, surgery and anaesthesia. There is also cover for short-term disability and a 24-hour accident plan – plus competitive rates on auto, home, property and liability insurance. The packages provide very competitive coverage and costs and can be selected for individual or family purposes.

Although the scheme is in its early days, take-up has been excellent, proving that the combination of low-cost and the quality of benefit are attractive to employees.

“As a result of the expanded benefit offerings made available in 2005, the participation by Durham School Services employees increased by 300%. This improved our ability to meet the medical needs of our employee group reflects our continued commitment to be the employer of choice.” Fred Martinez, Vice President of Human Resources, Durham School Services

www.durhamschoolservices.com

Providing benefits to employees has been a key focus during 2005

