

FLATBED

Keeping commitments



SCHILLI OPERATION MANAGES CHANGE AS IT FOCUSES ON EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

After 40 years in business, there's no doubt in Tom Schilli's mind that change is the only constant. When it comes to regulatory issues that impact his company, he says the key is "to learn how to make it work for us. It's difficult to avoid change imposed by regulations, so we embrace, accept and manage with it. When there are regulatory changes, we look for good things.

"For example," Schilli continues, "we think the pending regulation requiring electronic logging devices has awakened shippers and shown them how valuable a driver's time can be. That's actually helped us create a better way of life for our drivers."

Another issue that Schilli would like to see resolved is the lack of adequate, safe overnight parking and access to facilities for drivers. "It is something that gets in the way of a better experience for drivers across the industry," he states, "and it's a challenge we'll be facing for years to come."

As the owner of Indiana-based Schilli Transportation Services, Schilli says what's most important is making and keeping commitments to employees.

"Providing a good working environment helps us stay competitive," he states. "For instance, we're proud that over 20 years ago we realized how important it is to drivers to be home on weekends. We cater as much as possible to personal needs because that leads to a stable workforce. Good drivers have stable families and that leads to retention."

Driver recruitment and retention is especially challenging in the Schilli Specialized Flatbed Div., a platform trailer operation that hauls building materials, metal, machinery and wood products for customers in the eastern half of the U.S., specializing in job site deliveries. The issue is the manual labor required of flatbed drivers at pickup and delivery locations.

"There's a lot of time and effort involved in loading and unloading, tarping and uncovering flatbed loads," Schilli relates, "and when the cargo is high off the ground, there's an opportunity for drivers to fall. Drivers are still required to check that cargo is properly secured, but in most cases we either use loading services or stay away from facilities that do not have proper safety equipment."

The Flatbed Div. accounts for roughly

one-third of the Schilli Transportation Services operation. In total, the diversified logistics, transportation and distribution services business operates 425 Kenworth and Freightliner tractors and about 1,000 flatbed, dry van, moving and specialized trailers. Schilli also offers distribution, packaging, containerization, warehousing, storage, sales and leasing, and maintenance services.

A recent area of focus at Schilli, notes Jake Rudisill, general manager of Schilli Leasing, was to order 150 new East Manufacturing flatbed trailers. To date, the fleet has taken delivery of the first 20 BSTII 53-ft. units fitted with Hendrickson axle suspensions and disc brakes, as well as Jost landing gear and Hendrickson TireMaax Pro inflation systems.

"We've been running steel-aluminum combo units but felt that all-aluminum trailers rated for a 65,000-lb.-capacity concentrated 4-ft. load would give us more flexibility and the ability to haul heavier loads," Rudisill states.

Value is exactly what Tom Schilli says his company is all about, beginning with his focus on attracting and keeping satisfied employees.

"Today," he states, "I get the most satisfaction out of coaching and watching our people succeed than I do from any material success that comes from running a successful business."