



American Bus Association<sup>®</sup>

**Driving Force  
Council**

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## Guide to Workforce Development

## Purpose of this Guide:

The Driving Force, initially established in 2020, developed a comprehensive toolkit to address the national driver shortage, with content broadly applicable across the motorcoach industry. In 2025, the Driving Force transitioned into a council of the American Bus Association, expanding its scope to encompass the entire motorcoach and group travel industry. This guide builds upon the original toolkit, integrating new information aligned with the mission, values, and committees of the newly formed Driving Force Council.

## Mission Statement:

The Driving Force Council exists to advance the American Bus Association commitment to strengthening the motorcoach and group travel industry by cultivating a robust, future-ready workforce. The Council focuses on practical, industry-driven strategies that support member businesses through **workforce development, training, and retention initiatives**.

The Driving Force Council is dedicated to:

- **Industry Advancement:** Proactively strengthening the motorcoach and group travel industry through strategic workforce development.
- **Member Support:** Providing tangible, industry-driven strategies that directly benefit member businesses.
- **Future Readiness:** Cultivating a robust and adaptable workforce prepared for the evolving needs of the industry.
- **Collaborative Expertise:** Engaging diverse perspectives from internal committees, external experts, and strategic partners to inform and guide initiatives
- **Continuous Learning:** Championing ongoing education, training, and professional development for all levels of industry professionals.



## **Governance & Committees:**

**Driving Force Council Chair & Education**-Erin Sullivan, Bloom Tour & Charter Services

### **Employee Group Committees**

**Recruitment**- Chair: Mike McDonal - Saucon Technologies

**Onboarding & Retention**- Co Chairs: Pam Martinez, DATTCO & James Blain, PAX Training

### **C-Suite Committee**

**Executive Leadership** –Chair: Brent Maitland, AAAHI

### **Support Committees**

**Marketing & Communications**- Chair Adam Hall- John Hall's Alaska

**DEI & Culture**- Co Chairs: Staci Dritschel- Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp & Dagny Ashley-City of Quincy



## What is Workforce Development?

There are many definitions of Workforce Development, several which are listed below then summarized with the perspective of our industry.

### **Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)**

Workforce development encompasses policies and initiatives where employers and governments work together to equip individuals with skills needed to close the workforce participation gap, improve opportunities for talent to adapt to new technologies, and strengthen the education-to-employment pipeline to ensure workers acquire skills needed to meet future workforce demands.

### **U.S. Department of Labor**

Workforce development comprises activities and initiatives that match, educate, and train individuals to meet the needs of current and future businesses and industries while maintaining a thriving economy. This includes providing training and related services to prepare individuals for work and assist them in securing employment.

### **Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis**

Workforce development is education and training to meet the needs of current and future business and industry, encompassing changes to culture, attitudes, and people's potential that help positively influence a business's future success.

There are common threads and themes across all definitions, workforce development represents a strategic, coordinated approach that simultaneously serves individual career advancement, training, recruiting, retention, culture organizational competitiveness, and industry sustainability. It is not merely a human resources function—it is a business imperative requiring executive leadership and investment.

### **For ABA Members: A Working Definition**

*Workforce development is the strategic coordination of education, training, and support initiatives that equip individuals with the skills and competencies needed to meet current and future business demands, while simultaneously strengthening the organizational motorcoach and group travel industry. This is more than filling positions—it's about building sustainable careers, creating advancement pathways, and ensuring our industry thrives for generations to come.*



## 7 Key Themes That Expand the Driving Force Council's Focus from Drivers to a Broader Workforce

#	7 Key Themes	Core Focus in Motorcoach and Group Travel Industry
1.	<b>Career Growth &amp; Succession</b>	Building clear advancement paths from entry-level (e.g., trainee van/school bus/coach driver) to management.
2.	<b>Skills &amp; Compliance Training</b>	Continuous refinement of CDL/technical skills, integrating safety, customer service, and de-escalation training.
3.	<b>Strategic Recruitment &amp; Retention</b>	Targeted talent acquisition and proactive, measurable employee retention strategies.
4.	<b>Talent Pipeline Partnerships</b>	Collaboration with educational institutes and industry partners to secure a robust future talent supply.
5.	<b>Performance &amp; Competitiveness</b>	Aligning workforce investment (e.g., hiring, training) with core business outcomes and bottom-line success.
6.	<b>Holistic Support &amp; Inclusive Culture</b>	Fostering an equitable, respectful, and supportive work environment (including DEI initiatives).
7.	<b>Future Readiness &amp; Industry Advocacy</b>	Anticipating industry changes (e.g. technology, regulation) and incorporating AI & future technological advancements ensuring long-term sustainability



## About the American Bus Association

The American Bus Association is the most trusted motorcoach, group tour, and travel association in the industry. ABA's membership exceeds 2200 and continues to grow, reflecting its commitment to serving its members through advocacy, education and workforce development. Membership is broken up into the following categories.

### **MOTORCOACH OPERATOR MEMBERSHIP: 22% of ABA Membership**

Motorcoach operators perform a variety of transportation services such as charters, retail tours, scheduled service, sightseeing, local receptive operations, school bus, package express and special operations.

### **TOUR OPERATOR MEMBERSHIP: 9% of ABA Membership**

Tour operators organize and sell outbound tours for groups and frequently book motorcoaches for their groups. Some also act as receptive operators for their local area, and some own travel agencies.

### **TRAVEL INDUSTRY MEMBERSHIP: 64% of ABA Membership**

Travel Industry membership is available for travel/tourism/destination marketing organizations, tourism service/transportation companies, accommodations, attractions, and food service companies.

### **ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP: 5% of ABA Membership**

Products/Service Provider membership is available to companies that supply goods and services to the motorcoach and tour operator industry.



In the next section, we'll focus on some careers within the motorcoach and travel industry as well as some of the career paths ABA members have taken.

## Careers

The motorcoach, travel, and tourism sector provides a wide array of career opportunities beyond the driver's seat. Below are descriptions for some of the industry's most popular roles.

### Motorcoach Careers

#### Operations & Safety

These roles are the backbone of daily operations, ensuring everything runs efficiently.

- **Dispatcher:** Manages schedules, routes, and driver assignments, acting as the central hub for real-time adjustments and communication.
- **Operations Manager:** Oversees all operational aspects, including fleet management, scheduling, and staff supervision, to ensure high service standards and efficiency.
- **Logistics Coordinator:** Specializes in planning and coordinating the movement of vehicles and personnel, often dealing with complex itineraries and regulatory compliance.
- **Risk/Safety/Compliance Director:** Ensures adherence to all safety regulations and industry standards, developing and implementing training programs. Deals with government compliance, logs, permits, driver training, coaching, driver hiring, DOT & FMCSA compliance, and accident investigation.
- **Fleet Maintenance Manager:** Oversees the maintenance and repair of the motorcoach fleet, ensuring vehicles are safe and operational. This role works directly with bus manufacturers for parts, warranty issues, and advanced technical support.
- **Driver/Motorcoach Operator/Professional Motorcoach Operator:** Responsible for transporting clients, delivering new and used coaches, fueling, test drives, pickups, and inter-company coach transfers.



## Sales, Customer Service and Marketing

These professionals are responsible for attracting customers and promoting services.

- **Sales Representative/Manager:** Develops relationships with clients, sells tour packages, charter services, and travel experiences to individuals and groups. Handles inquiries, bookings, and resolves issues for passengers, providing a friendly and helpful point of contact.
- **Marketing Specialist:** Creates and executes marketing campaigns, manages social media, and develops promotional materials to increase brand awareness and bookings. This includes collaborating with visitor's bureaus and destination marketing organizations to promote regional travel.
- **Tour Planner:** Designs and curates travel itineraries, collaborating with attractions, accommodations, and transportation providers to create memorable experiences. This role often involves forging partnerships with hotels, restaurants, visitor's bureaus, and attractions to create comprehensive travel packages.
- **Receptive Operator:** Specializes in arranging local services for incoming groups, including transportation, accommodations, and activities. They often work closely with local visitor's bureaus to showcase the best of a destination.
- **Tour Director/Guide:** Leads groups on tours, providing commentary, managing logistics on the ground, and ensuring an engaging and enjoyable experience for travelers. This includes coordinating with hotels for check-ins, restaurants for meal times, and local visitor's bureaus for activity recommendations.

## Tourism and Hospitality Careers

These roles are crucial for the broader travel and tourism ecosystem, working with motorcoach operators to deliver complete travel experiences.

- **Hotel Manager:** Oversees all aspects of hotel operations, from guest services and staff management to financial performance, ensuring a positive experience for all guests, including motorcoach groups.
- **Restaurant Manager:** Manages daily restaurant operations, including staff, inventory, and customer service, often coordinating with tour groups for meal times and special requests.
- **Museum/Attraction Educator:** Designs and delivers educational programs and tours for visitors of all ages, including specialized presentations for motorcoach groups, enhancing their cultural and historical experiences.





- **Event and Conference Services Manager (Hotels/Venues):** Specializes in planning and executing events, conferences, and group bookings, working closely with motorcoach and tour operators to facilitate seamless group travel logistics, including room blocks and catering.
- **Destination Marketing Professional (Convention & Visitor's Bureau):** Promotes a specific city, region, or attraction to potential visitors and tour operators for meetings, conventions and tourism often collaborating with motorcoach companies to develop and market travel packages.
- **Catering Manager:** Oversees food and beverage services for events and groups, coordinating menus and logistics for tour groups dining at hotels, restaurants, or specific venues.
- **Visitor and Tour Coordinator:** Books motorcoach tours, school field trips, and small group visits, and gives campus tours.
- **Sales Director/Manager:** Attracts and books groups and meetings, promotes group travel, and manages international and domestic travel trade markets.

## Bus Manufacturing Careers

Within the motorcoach and group travel industry, bus manufacturing represents a distinct and crucial sector with highly specialized career options.. These roles support the creation, innovation, and maintenance of the vehicles that power the industry.

- **Engineer:** Designs and develops new bus models, features and improvements , focusing on performance, safety, fuel efficiency, and structural integrity. This includes expertise in mechanical, and electrical systems engineering.
- **Sourcing and Purchasing:** Conducts strategic research into new suppliers, materials, and technologies to ensure long-term supply chain resilience. This role benchmarks, negotiates supply agreements, and coordinates component delivery for both production and aftermarket parts, requiring expertise in global logistics and technical procurement.
- **Bus Sales Representative:** Sells new and used buses to tour operators, public transit authorities, schools, and private companies, managing client relationships and achieving sales targets.
- **Technical Support or Solutions Managers:** Works with motorcoach operators to understand the technical operations of their vehicles, conducts training to drivers and technicians. Assist with ongoing technical issues and challenging problems often requiring deep product knowledge. This role requires both communication skills and mastery of technical skills. Coordinates most aspects



of after-sales support.

- **Parts sales representatives:** Manages Advises on parts stocking strategies and assists with ensuring a supply of spare parts.
- **Warranty Specialist:** Handles warranty claims and issues, working with operators to resolve product-related problems and ensure customer satisfaction.
- **Service Center Manager:** Manages the service location, manages a team of mechanics, parts and service advisors. Strives for excellent customer service and vehicle uptime.

## All industry

Careers that are essential for the overall functioning of businesses.

- **Human Resources Specialist:** Manages recruitment, employee relations, benefits, and compliance, supporting the workforce from hiring to retention.
- **Accounting/Finance:** Handles financial records, payroll, budgeting, and financial reporting, ensuring fiscal health and compliance.
- **IT Support/Systems Administrator:** Manages and maintains the technology infrastructure, including booking systems, communication networks, and fleet tracking software.
- **CEO/President:** Provides strategic leadership and vision, overseeing all company operations, setting long-term goals, and ensuring financial health and growth.
- **Director of Business Development:** Identifies and prospects new business, re-engages customers, handles public relations, marketing, social media, and networking.
- **Operations Manager:** Oversees all aspects of company operations, including strategic planning, staff leadership, customer relations, financial management, and business development across charter, tour, and travel divisions.

## Building Your Future: Defined Career Paths

This section outlines various career paths within the motorcoach and group travel industry, demonstrating potential growth and specialization across different roles. It is designed to help individuals visualize their professional journey and identify opportunities for advancement, from entry-level positions to leadership roles.

The previous section outlined key roles; this section illustrates the potential for growth within them.



## Why Career Paths Matter:

### For employees:

- Provides motivation and something to work toward
- Shows the company invests in developing people
- Creates hope that income and responsibility can grow
- Demonstrates that loyalty and performance are rewarded

### For the company:

- Builds a pipeline of qualified internal candidates
- Retains institutional knowledge
- Reduces external recruiting costs
- Creates ambassadors who promote the company to potential hires

## Driver

### Start Your Journey: Entry Level

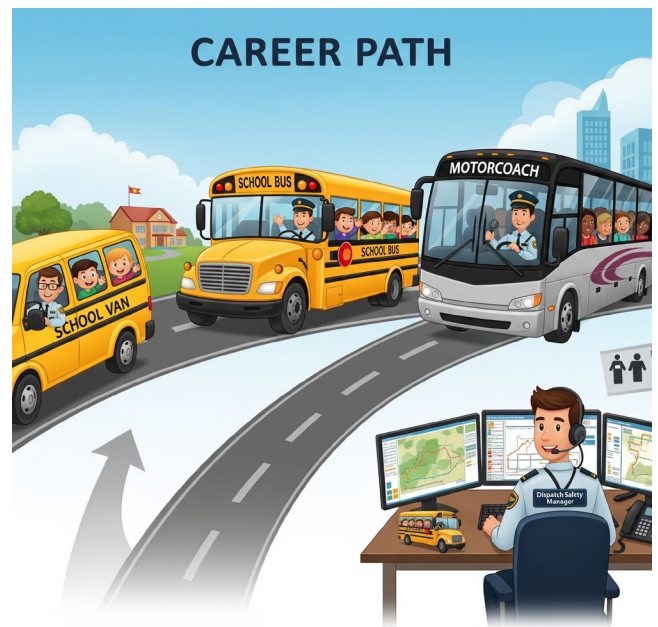
- **Van Driver:** Begin by transporting passengers in smaller vehicles, building foundational skills in customer service and safe driving.

### Accelerate Your Career: Stepping Up

- **School Bus Driver:** Advance to a vital role, ensuring the safe transport of students. This step often requires specialized training and a commercial driver's license (CDL).
- **Motorcoach Driver:** Take the wheel of larger motorcoaches for tours, charters, and longer routes, requiring advanced driving skills and a commercial driver's license (CDL).

### Drive Your Future: Leadership & Specialization

- **Dispatcher:** Become the orchestrator behind the scenes, managing routes, schedules, and driver assignments for optimal efficiency.



- **Manager:** Lead a team, oversee fleet operations, and contribute to the strategic growth of the company, leveraging leadership and business acumen.
- **Safety/Trainer:** Become an expert in safety protocols, developing and delivering crucial training programs to ensure the well-being of all passengers and staff.

## Maintenance

Start Your Journey: Entry Level

**Maintenance Apprentice:** Start hands-on, learning the fundamentals of vehicle repair and preventive maintenance under experienced technicians and attend technical school.

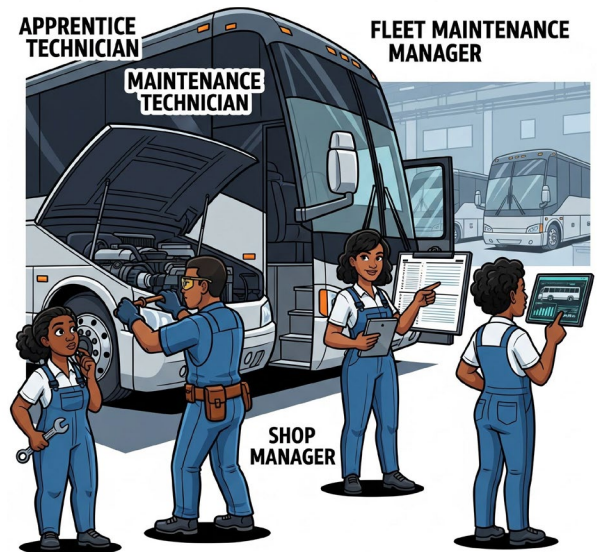
Accelerate Your Career: Stepping Up

**Maintenance Technician:** Specialize in diagnosing and repairing complex mechanical, electrical, and hydraulic systems, ensuring the fleet remains operational.

Drive Your Future: Leadership & Specialization

**Shop Supervisor/Manager:** Oversee maintenance staff, manage repair schedules, and ensure the efficient operation of the maintenance facility.

**Fleet Maintenance Manager:** Lead all aspects of fleet upkeep, from budgeting and parts procurement to strategic planning for vehicle longevity and performance.



# Travel Industry

## Start Your Journey: Entry Level

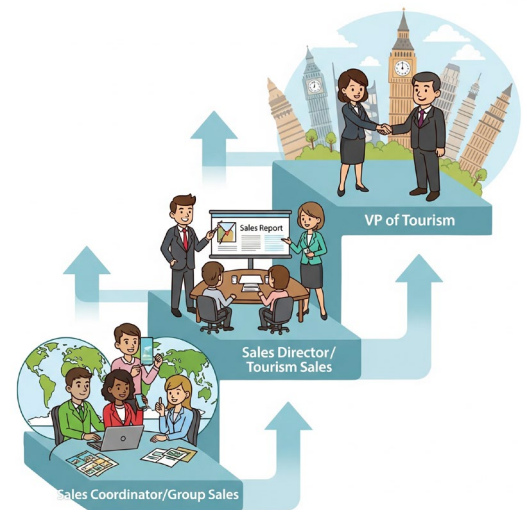
**Sales Coordinator/Group Sales:** Focus on supporting sales teams, managing logistics for specific accounts, or selling individual charter trips and group bookings

## Accelerate Your Career: Stepping Up

**Sales Director/ Tourism Sales:** Lead sales initiatives, attract large groups/meetings, manage key market segments (international/domestic travel trade, sports), and prospect new business.

## Drive Your Future: Leadership & Specialization

**VP Tourism:** Develop and lead the overall commercial strategy, focus on market growth, customer experience, and company-wide sales vision.



# Executive Leadership

## Start Your Journey: Entry Level

- **Dispatcher:** Begin by mastering the core of daily operations, including real-time logistics, scheduling, route management, and driver communications. This provides a deep, foundational understanding of the company's service delivery.
- **Sales Coordinator/Group Sales :** Focus on supporting sales teams, managing logistics for specific accounts, or selling individual charter trips and group bookings. This provides a crucial understanding of the revenue-generating side of the business.



## Accelerate Your Career: Stepping Up

- **Operations Manager:** Advance to oversee all aspects of company operations, including fleet management, staff supervision, and strategic planning across charter, tour, and travel divisions. This builds essential business acumen and management skills.

## Drive Your Future: Leadership & Specialization

- **Director of Business Development :** Transition to a strategic role focused on identifying new revenue streams, re-engaging customers, managing public relations, and developing marketing/networking strategies. This cultivates the commercial and external-facing expertise needed for executive roles.
- **CEO/President:** The final step, providing strategic leadership and vision, overseeing all company operations, setting long-term goals, and ensuring the company's financial health and strategic growth.





The final section of our guide will take you through the strategic work of our committees covering, DEI & Culture, Recruitment, Onboarding and Retention, the Executive Role in Workforce Development and Marketing & Communication strategies. The information provided by these committees is designed to support and strengthen ABA's interconnected workforce.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion & Culture:

This section provides actionable strategies to achieve Theme 6: Holistic Support & Inclusive Culture.

### Purpose and Vision

- Fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace culture.
- The motorcoach and group travel industry connects people, cultures, and stories — it thrives when everyone feels welcome. This guideline empowers tourism professionals to intentionally build workplaces and guest experiences that celebrate diversity, ensure equity, and foster inclusion.
- The shared goal is to create spaces where every employee, traveler, and community member feels valued, respected, and authentically represented.
- View DEI not as compliance, but as **hospitality in action**.

### Organizational Mission & Commitment to Inclusion

- **Internal Commitment:** Ensure policies and practices support employees across all backgrounds, abilities, identities, and experiences.
- **External Commitment:** Communicate inclusion through marketing, partnerships, and visitor experiences that honor diverse perspectives and cultural authenticity.
- **Visible Accountability:** Publish an annual or semi-annual statement outlining measurable DEI goals and progress.

### Assessing Your Organization's DEI Readiness

Before implementing DEI strategies, evaluate where your organization currently stands:

- **DEI-Ready:** Actively engaged with established DEI policies, diverse hiring, inclusive marketing, and staff training.
- **DEI-Friendly:** Positive intent and emerging practices, but limited formal structure or metrics.



- **DEI-No Opinion:** No active DEI initiatives or clear stance; opportunities exist to start building awareness and direction.

*Action Step:*

Use surveys, focus groups, or anonymous feedback forms to understand employee perceptions and identify gaps.

## **Inclusive Marketing and Representation**

Tourism marketing should reflect the real, diverse world of travelers and residents alike.

- Showcase people of **all races, ages, abilities, gender identities, and backgrounds** in visual content.
- Ensure **language, tone, and imagery** celebrate inclusion, avoiding stereotypes or tokenism.
- Partner with **diverse creators and communities** to tell authentic stories.
- Audit marketing materials annually to ensure representation remains current and intentional.

*Example:*

Promote accessibility-friendly tours or spotlight stories of travelers with disabilities experiencing your destination.

## **Inclusive Recruitment & Workforce Practices**

Recruitment and retention strategies should expand opportunities for underrepresented groups and/or communities.

- Broaden outreach to include historically Black colleges, tribal colleges, community centers, and disability-focused organizations.
- Ensure job descriptions use **inclusive language** and focus on essential skills.
- Offer flexible schedules, mentorship, and transparent growth pathways to support work-life balance.
- Establish fair and consistent evaluation criteria for hiring and promotions.

## **Career Development & Work-Life Balance**

Creating equitable growth opportunities strengthens retention and morale.

- Provide **training and mentorship programs** that support advancement for all employees.
- Encourage **career pathing** discussions to help employees visualize their long-term trajectory.





- Promote policies that support **family, health, and personal well-being** (flexible scheduling, mental health resources, etc.).

### Inclusive Service & Accessibility Awareness

Every staff member, from ticketing to tour guiding, should understand the principles of inclusive service.

- Offer **ongoing training** on disability awareness, service etiquette, and accessible tourism.
- Regularly evaluate guest touchpoints — signage, websites, transportation — for ADA compliance and beyond.

*Example: Headphones for tours, sensory kits, full tour transcribed for hearing impaired.*

- Empower employees to respond with empathy and flexibility to diverse guest needs.

### Empathy & Inclusive Leadership Training

Management sets the tone for workplace culture.

- Provide leaders with **DEI and empathy training** to cultivate understanding and psychological safety.
- Encourage open, non-defensive dialogue about diversity, encouraging questions and shared learning.
- Create **inclusive feedback channels** where all staff can safely share experiences or suggestions.

### Understanding Implicit Bias & Microaggressions

Awareness is key to prevention.

- Conduct **bias training** to help staff and guides recognize unconscious assumptions that can influence interactions.
- Provide **real-world tourism scenarios** (e.g., guest interactions, team dynamics) for applied learning.
- Encourage teaching opportunities and compassionate correction when microaggressions occur.

### Measuring Progress & Sustaining Momentum

- Develop **DEI scorecards or dashboards** that track representation, satisfaction, and engagement.
- Recognize and celebrate milestones to reinforce progress.



- Establish a **DEI Committee or Ambassador Program** representing different departments and partner organizations.

## Recruitment Roadmap: From Prospect to New Hire

### Step 1: Strategic Outreach & Sourcing; The Reach

**The reach is the beginning to all recruiting.** Reach is the means we use to spread the word about not only our opportunities, but our culture and how we do things uniquely.

Your reach should be as unique as your organization itself. What channels do you use to reach candidates for positions available in your organization? Are they the same channels your competitors are using as well? What makes your organization different or stand out amongst all the others trying to reach the same audience as you are?

There are many factors to consider when finding your reach.

- When do I need to make my reach to have the right number of employees available for my seasonal needs?
- Is your reach going to be constant or will it be variable to fill your employment needs while navigating overemployment and underemployment conditions within your organization?
- How am I tracking KPI's such as cost per hire and quality of hire to determine which recruitment strategies are providing the best ROI?

**Where do you reach?** Where are your target employees and how do we get their attention?

- Don't be afraid to use the traditional portals such as online ads, your own website and even headhunters for specialized talents you are looking for.
- Look beyond the apparent and try different ways of reaching candidates, especially if the traditional means haven't been successful for you. Look to Complimentary Industries for candidates that can easily transition to your company. Trucking to Motorcoach Driver, Retail/High-Volume Customer Service to Tour Director, Hospitality/Hotel Operations to Dispatch/Operations Management. Have a Presence at Industry & Vocational Events: Go beyond job fairs to actively participate in high school and vocational school career days,



technical college open houses, and professional association conferences to build a long-term talent pipeline.

- Ensure all recruitment and job descriptions adhere to the standards outlined in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion & Culture section to ensure inclusive language and broad outreach.
- Be open to recruit always. There have been successes in the most extraordinary, unplanned events. Have you ever been recruited in the grocery line? Your child's athletic event? Reaching and recruiting should always be on your mind even in your afterwork life.

**What should your reach look like?** That of course is going to vary based on the position you are filling and the circumstance of the conversation. Do you have your 30 second elevator pitch ready in your mind for that unexpected conversation? Is your company website accessible and leads candidates to an easy application or information on how to become part of your team? Reach and Recruiting don't have to be a formal process at a job fair or planned event; you just need to be ready to react when an opportunity presents itself.

**Recruiting in its simplest form is telling your story** and asking others to become part of your story. A structured program with clear, attractive rewards is a crucial recruitment channel.

**So how do we tell our story.....**

Your ***elevator pitch*** is your 30 seconds to tell enough of your story to have someone wanting to at least know more about your organization. Your pitch needs to be relevant to the candidate and the position you are speaking with. The message may also be focused depending on a particular question or part of your conversation. Remember to include how your company is unique to make them want to know more.

Your ***company video*** is another great way to promote your company in a myriad of different media and forums. The video doesn't need to be a professional product, it just needs to be genuine. Your video should show your culture in pictures and words. Pictures and words that show your workspaces, employees and why your employees like coming to work there. Emphasize the sense of belonging, technology used as well as the longevity of your workforce. Let your employees be your recruiters!

Your ***company career page*** on your website should be current and enticing. Take your elevator pitch along with your company video and incorporate them into your



career page. Now that you have their interest, provide a detailed job description. Consider providing an online application to apply immediately when you have their attention. If an online application is not possible, provide a get more information request or schedule an online interview. Be sure that your page is accessible and easily found on your website.

Your **social media pages and commercial workforce recruiting sites** should be current and stand out from the rest. Keep building your content from the other media you are using and spread them out through the various social media sites as well as Indeed, Monster and industry specific recruiting sites. Don't forget to check job boards that may be offered by industry associations.

**Develop new employment segments** of prospective employees that may be non-traditional. These segments could be recruiting employees that may be looking for part-time work to supplement their income. They may not have specific knowledge in the software you use or the vehicles you may operate but may have the interpersonal skills that are difficult at best to teach. Consider first responders, military, retail and customer service workers. Least but not least, have you ever considered recruiting your customers? They enjoy what you do. They are educated consumers so why not ask them to educate others.

## **Step 2: Candidate Assessment & Interviewing**

How do we **transform them from candidate to employee**? Speed and efficiency are the keys to recruiting and hiring new employees. Remember, when we are interviewing prospective employees, they are interviewing your company as well. How long did it take to get a response from their initial contact? Do you send a generic thanks for your interest reply or is the reply additional information, an application or even a calendar to schedule a phone interview? Make your process simple and efficient.

The **in-person interview** should be a final step and when you really show your organization off. When candidates get to this step both the candidate and the company have become invested in this person and potential offer. This is where your team and facility can truly show you are not like many other companies in the industry. Inform your front desk or person making the first contact with the candidate knowing they are coming make sure they greet them quickly and genuinely. The candidate should be asked to complete anything they need to move forward to the interview. This can be providing a formal application, any copies of credentials that



may be needed or discussed in the interview. Also, be sure to show them any specific areas of your facility that may emphasize your culture, mission and your workplace environment.

### Step 3: Making the Offer

**Make the offer** in a very timely, detailed communication. Confirm the position, responsibilities, compensation and start dates. Let the candidate know you are excited about them joining your team. These last recruiting steps set the tone and expectation for both the candidate and the company.

In our original toolkit, we created a roadmap for recruiting that can be used to map out the steps discussed in this document.



## Onboarding & Retention: From first day to every day

### Introduction: Building a Workforce That Stays

Replacing an employee costs approximately 3 times their annual salary when you factor in lost productivity, recruitment costs, training time, and the ripple effects on team morale. Investing in onboarding and retention isn't just good for people—it's essential for your bottom line.

### Section 1: Hiring the Right People

**The foundation of retention is hiring people who are the right fit from the start.**

Before You Post the Job

**Define what "right fit" means for your company:**

- What values matter most in your workplace? (Safety-first mindset? Customer service excellence? Teamwork?)
- What personality traits succeed at your company in that specific role?
- What are the non-negotiables vs. nice-to-haves?

**Examples:** A driver who values independence and solitude may struggle in a role that requires constant interaction with passengers. A mechanic who thrives on variety may become frustrated with repetitive maintenance schedules. An office worker who dislikes being on the phone will likely struggle and face challenges to success. A tour planner who dislikes continuous negotiation may struggle with vendor relations. A hotel manager who is uncomfortable with high visibility problem solving may be a poor fit.

### During the Interview Process

**Look beyond the resume:**

- **Ask behavioral questions:** "Tell me about a time when..." questions reveal how candidates actually handle real situations.
- **Include a realistic job preview:** Let candidates see the actual working environment—the vehicles, the shop, the office. No surprises means fewer early departures.
- **Have them meet the team:** Peer interactions often reveal culture fit better than manager interviews.



- **Be transparent about challenges:** Discuss early morning or late night starts, weekend work, and the expectations you have. People appreciate honesty & transparency.

#### **Red flag behaviors to watch for:**

- Inability to give specific examples of past work.
- Speaking negatively about previous employers.
- Showing up unprepared or disrespectful to the interview process.
- Lack of questions about the job or the company.

#### **Making the Offer**

##### **Set the stage for retention before day one:**

- Clearly explain compensation, benefits, and schedule expectations
- Provide a written offer with all details confirmed
- Share what the first week will look like
- Introduce them to their future supervisor or mentor via phone or email

**Quick Win:** Send a welcome email before their start date with parking information, dress code, what to bring, and who they'll meet first. This reduces first-day anxiety and shows you're organized and care about their experience.

## **Section 2: Orientation vs. Onboarding**

**Most companies confuse these two concepts. Understanding the difference is critical to retention.**

#### **The Critical Distinction**

##### **Orientation = The Paperwork**

- Typically 1-3 days
- Covers compliance, policies, and administrative tasks.
- Focuses on "what you need to know to get started."

##### **Onboarding = The Integration Process**

- Typically 90-180 days
- Covers culture, relationships, and skill development.
- Focuses on "how to succeed and feel part of the team."



**The mistake most companies make:** They finish orientation and assume onboarding is complete. Then they wonder why new hires leave within the first 90 days.

## **Part 1: Orientation**

**Goal:** Complete all necessary compliance training and paperwork while making a positive first impression.

### **Essential Orientation Checklist**

#### **Administrative (typically Day 1-2):**

- Complete all employment paperwork (I-9, W-4, direct deposit, etc.)
- Enroll in benefits programs.
- Issue ID badge, keys, uniform, and any necessary equipment or tools
- Set up computer access, email, and relevant systems (if applicable)
- Review and sign the acknowledgment of the employee handbook
- Provide facility tour (break rooms, restrooms, emergency exits)

#### **Safety & Compliance Training:**

- OSHA safety requirements for their role
- Emergency procedures and evacuation routes
- Hazard communication and right-to-know
- Company safety policies and reporting procedures
- Drug and alcohol policy (especially for DOT-covered employees)
- Workplace harassment and discrimination prevention
- Security protocols and facility access procedures

#### **Role-Specific Orientation:**

##### *For Drivers:*

- DOT medical certification verification
- CDL verification and road test
- Hours of service regulations
- Vehicle inspection procedures
- Passenger safety and customer service standards
- Route familiarization
- Technology training (GPS, communication devices, fare systems)





*For Maintenance and Technical Staff:*

- Shop safety protocols and PPE requirements
- Equipment operation and lockout/tagout procedures
- Parts ordering and inventory systems
- Inspection standards and documentation requirements
- Specialized tool checkout procedures
- Environmental compliance (e.g., fluid disposal)

*For Administrative, Sales & Tourism Professionals:*

- Phone and communication systems
- Customer service standards and protocols
- Scheduling and dispatch software
- Data privacy and confidentiality requirements
- Filing and documentation procedures

**Make Orientation Engaging (Not Just a Video Marathon)**

**Don't:**

- Do not park new hires in a conference room for 8 hours of videos
- Do not rush through important safety information
- Do not overload new hires with information they won't need for months, if ever
- Do not allow disengaged trainers to conduct orientation

**Do:**

- Break up training into manageable chunks with breaks
- Use a mix of formats: videos, hands-on practice, discussions, and facility tours
- Reinforce online and video training with real-world hands-on experience
- Have enthusiastic employees share why they love working here
- Provide a reference guide they can review later, either via print or online
- End each day by asking what questions they have and reviewing what was covered
- Include a welcome lunch with their team on day one



## Part 2: Onboarding

**Goal:** Transform a new hire into a confident, productive, engaged team member who feels valued and connected.

### The 30-60-90 Day Framework

#### Days 1-30: Foundation Building

*Focus: Learning the basics and building relationships*

- Assign a mentor (not their direct supervisor) for daily check-ins
- Provide a written first-month plan with clear expectations
- Schedule regular check-ins with supervisor (at least weekly)
- Introduce them to key people across departments
- Involve them in team meetings and activities
- Start technical training with hands-on practice
- Give them small, achievable tasks to build confidence

#### Days 31-60: Skill Development

*Focus: Building competence and autonomy*

- Provide specific feedback on performance (positive and constructive)
- Connect their work to the company's larger mission and goals
- Continue mentor check-ins (can decrease frequency to 2-3 times per week)
- Address any performance concerns immediately—don't let issues fester

#### Days 61-90: Integration & Assessment

*Focus: Full integration into the team and evaluation of fit*

- Celebrate their 90-day milestone publicly
- A new hire should be performing core job functions independently
- Conduct a formal performance evaluation
- Discuss career development opportunities and long-term goals



## Role-Specific Onboarding Best Practices

### For Drivers:

#### *First Month:*

- Pair with experienced driver for ride-alongs
- Start with easier routes and gradually progress to complex runs
- Provide written route guides and tips from veteran drivers
- Schedule regular debriefs after early trips to answer questions

#### *Ongoing:*

- Monthly driver meetings to share tips and build camaraderie
- Recognition program for excellent customer service or safety
- Provide continuing education on customer service, safety updates, or new equipment

### For Maintenance and Technical Staff:

#### *First Month:*

- Shadow senior mechanics on various repair types
- Start with PM (preventive maintenance) tasks, progress to diagnostics
- Learn specific fleet's quirks and common issues
- Review documentation and parts ordering procedures with hands-on practice

#### *Ongoing:*

- Training on new equipment or technology as it's introduced
- Encourage new certifications and provide support for study/testing
- Regular shop meetings to discuss recurring issues and solutions
- Cross-training opportunities on different vehicle systems and/or types

### For Administrative, Sales & Tourism Professionals:

#### *First Month:*

- Shadow each department to understand how work flows through the company
- Learn one process at a time rather than being overwhelmed with everything
- Practice with sample scenarios before handling real customers
- Meet regularly with the supervisor to review the quality of work



- Hotel/Attraction Staff: Complete a "guest experience" audit of the venue, including check-in, dining, and accessibility points, to reinforce the customer-first mindset
- Destination Marketing: Learn the primary target markets, key partners (including motorcoach operators), and brand voice/style guidelines before developing any external materials.
- Sales/Tour Planners: Shadow an experienced Tour Planner's full process, from initial inquiry to post-tour follow-up.

#### *Ongoing:*

- Cross-training on other office functions for backup coverage
- Professional development opportunities (customer service training, software skills)
- Involvement in process improvement initiatives
- Regular team meetings to maintain communication and morale

#### **Common Onboarding Mistakes to Avoid**

1. **"You will learn that later" approach** - Not covering everything a new hire might need with the intention of getting back to it later. (No one ever comes back to it later, and then problems happen.)
2. **Information overload on Day 1** - Spread training over time; people can only absorb so much
3. **No clear success metrics** - New hires need to know what "good" looks like
4. **Inconsistent check-ins** - Don't go silent after orientation week
5. **Ignoring warning signs** - If someone is struggling at 30 days, intervene immediately
6. **Failing to collect feedback** - Ask new hires what's working and what isn't in their onboarding

### **Section 3: Creating a Culture for Retention**

**People don't leave jobs—they leave people & cultures. You've hired well and onboarded thoroughly. Now the real work begins: creating a workplace where people choose to stay.**



## Defining Your Culture

### Culture is not:

- A mission statement on the wall
- A party once a quarter
- What management says it should be

### Culture is:

- How decisions actually get made
- How people treat each other when nobody's looking
- What behaviors get rewarded and what gets tolerated
- The unwritten rules everyone follows

## Discovering Your Current Culture

### Ask yourself honestly:

- How do employees describe working here to their friends and family?
- What stories do people tell about the company (good and bad)?
- Do people arrive early and stay late because they want to, or leave exactly at quitting time?
- When something goes wrong, do people speak up or stay silent?
- Are top performers staying and growing, or leaving for competitors?
- Do employees refer talented friends to work here?

## Changing a Culture

**Reality check:** Culture change is hard, takes time (minimum 12-18 months), and requires consistent leadership commitment. But it can be done.

## The Culture Change Roadmap

### Step 1: Leadership Alignment (Months 1-2)

- The leadership team must agree on what needs to change and why
- Identify specific behaviors to start, stop, and continue
- Commit to modeling new behaviors consistently—no exceptions for anyone

### Step 2: Communicate Clearly (Month 2)



- Share honestly why change is needed (poor retention, safety concerns, customer complaints, etc.)
- Explain the new culture vision in concrete, observable terms
- Tell people what will be different and what will stay the same
- Be prepared for skepticism—many have seen "flavor of the month" initiatives fail

### **Step 3: Align Systems and Processes (Months 3-6)**

- Update hiring criteria to reflect the desired culture
- Revise performance reviews to measure new behaviors
- Adjust recognition and rewards to reinforce what you want
- Remove or reassign leaders who won't or can't model the new culture (this is critical—people watch leaders)

### **Step 4: Reinforce Constantly (Months 6-18+)**

- Celebrate examples of the new culture in action
- Address violations quickly and consistently
- Keep talking about the culture in meetings, communications, and decisions
- Measure progress through retention rates, engagement surveys, and performance metrics

### **Making Your Culture Stand Out**

*In a competitive market, your culture must be a recruiting and retention advantage.*

### **What Motorcoach Employees Value (Based on Industry Data)**

#### **Drivers prioritize:**

1. Predictable schedules and respect for home time
2. Well-maintained, safe equipment
3. Being treated with respect by office staff and management
4. Competitive pay with transparent policies
5. Opportunities for preferred routes or trip types

#### **Mechanics prioritize:**

1. Having proper tools and parts to do the job right
2. Respect for their expertise and judgment



3. Safe, clean working environment
4. Opportunities to work on interesting problems, not just PMs
5. Support for professional development and certifications

#### **Administrative, Sales and Tourism Professionals prioritize:**

1. Clear communication and defined responsibilities
2. Being valued as professionals, not just "admin."
3. Work-life balance and reasonable workload
4. Opportunities to solve problems, not just process paperwork
5. Positive, collaborative team environment

### **Differentiation Strategies That Actually Work**

#### **1. Exceptional Communication**

- Morning safety huddles that take 10 minutes but keep everyone informed
- Direct phone access to dispatchers/managers (not voicemail jail)
- Transparent explanations when difficult decisions are made
- Regular all-staff meetings (monthly or quarterly) to share company performance and direction

#### **2. Quality Equipment and Tools**

- Don't ask drivers to operate unsafe or unreliable vehicles
- Provide mechanics with the diagnostic tools and parts needed
- Give office staff functioning computers and updated software
- Show respect through investment in what people need to succeed

#### **3. Flexibility and Trust**

- Allow schedule swaps between employees when possible
- Trust experienced employees to make judgment calls
- Offer shift preferences when operationally feasible
- Provide time off for family emergencies without guilt or punishment

#### **4. Recognition Beyond Paychecks**

- Publicly celebrate milestones (years of service, safety achievements)
- "Caught doing it right" programs with spot bonuses
- Driver/Employee of the Month with meaningful rewards
- Thank people specifically for what they did, not generic praise



## 5. Investment in People

- Pay for relevant certifications and training
- Create apprenticeship programs for new mechanics
- Promote from within whenever possible
- Cross-train to provide career variety and growth

### What NOT to do:

- Don't copy another company's culture gimmicks if they don't fit yours
- Don't create perks that only benefit one group (e.g., only office staff get bonuses)
- Don't implement programs you can't sustain (one-time initiatives feel like manipulation when they disappear)
- Don't ignore fundamental problems (pay, equipment, scheduling) while offering surface perks (pizza parties)

### Work-Life Balance: Setting Realistic Expectations

*The motorcoach & group travel industry has unique scheduling challenges. Pretending otherwise destroys trust.*

### Be Honest About the Reality

#### For Drivers:

- Over-the-road trips mean time away from home—don't sugar-coat it
- Weekend and holiday work is often required
- Last-minute schedule changes happen
- **Explain how you minimize these impacts and respect their personal lives**

#### For Maintenance, Safety and Technical Staff:

- Breakdown calls don't respect business hours
- Some weekend or on-call work may be required
- Physical demands are real (crawling, heavy lifting, working in weather)
- BUT: Show how you rotate on-call duties fairly and provide recovery time

#### For Administrative, Sales & Tourism Professionals:

- Busy seasons mean longer hours
- Customer emergencies create urgent demands





- Multitasking and interruptions are constant
- **Demonstrate how you protect their time and prevent burnout**

## Creating Balance Within Industry Constraints

### Strategies that work:

#### 1. Predictability When Possible

- Publish schedules as far in advance as you can
- Use rotation systems for undesirable shifts so the burden is shared
- Honor schedule requests when operationally feasible
- Minimize last-minute changes unless truly necessary

#### 2. Meaningful Time Off

- Encourage people to actually use their vacation days
- Don't call employees on their days off unless it's a genuine emergency
- Create blackout dates if needed, but also guarantee some peak-time off
- Respect personal milestones (birthdays, anniversaries, kids' events)

#### 3. Workload Management

- Monitor overtime hours and intervene when someone is burning out
- Hire adequate staff instead of running perpetually lean
- Temporary increase in workload is acceptable; permanent overload is not
- Be willing to turn down business if you don't have the capacity to deliver safely

#### 4. Boundaries and Expectations

- Define what "emergency contact" means (someone's injured, a bus broke down, etc.)
- Don't expect instant responses to non-urgent emails/texts outside work hours
- Model healthy boundaries as a leader—if you send midnight emails, others feel pressured to do the same
- Create coverage plans so people can truly disconnect on vacation

### Red Flags You're Failing at Work-Life Balance:

- Employees routinely work 60+ hour weeks
- People don't take vacations because they're afraid of returning to chaos
- Staff are frequently called on days off
- Turnover is highest among employees with families
- Exit interviews cite "burnout" or "no personal life" as reasons for leaving



## **Taking Care of Employees: Beyond the Paycheck**

*People stay where they feel valued and supported as whole humans, not just labor units.*

### **Physical Well-being:**

- Safe, maintained equipment and work environments
- Adequate break facilities (clean restrooms, break rooms with refrigeration/microwaves)
- PPE and safety equipment are readily available
- Access to water, especially for drivers and mechanics
- Ergonomic considerations (mechanics' creepers, drivers' seats, office furniture)
- Health insurance and other benefits are competitive with the local market

### **Mental and Emotional Well-Being:**

- EAP (Employee Assistance Program) for confidential counseling
- Stress management resources
- Clear paths to raise concerns without retaliation
- Support during personal crises (illness, family emergencies, grief)
- Reasonable accommodation for mental health needs

### **Financial Well-being:**

- Fair, competitive compensation reviewed regularly
- Transparent pay structures (people understand how pay is determined)
- On-time, accurate paychecks (sounds basic, but errors destroy trust)
- Opportunities for overtime or additional income when desired
- Financial wellness education (retirement planning, budgeting)

### **Professional Well-being:**

- Clear expectations and consistent feedback
- Tools and training needed to succeed
- Opportunities to learn and advance
- Being trusted to do the job without micromanagement
- Having input into decisions that affect their work

### **Social Well-being:**

- Respectful, supportive coworkers



- Inclusion in team activities and communication
- Celebration of milestones and achievements
- Feeling part of something larger than just a job

### **The "Small Gestures" That Matter:**

- Remembering and acknowledging birthdays or work anniversaries
- Asking about family members by name
- Providing lunch during mandatory training or long meetings
- Sending get-well or sympathy cards
- Covering an employee's shift so they can attend a child's event
- Taking time to say "thank you" for specific contributions

### **Communication: The Foundation of Everything**

*Poor communication is the #1 cause of turnover. Even good cultures fail without effective communication.*

### **What Employees Need to Know**

#### **Daily/Weekly:**

- Their schedule and any changes
- Safety issues or concerns that affect them
- Operational updates (traffic, weather, route changes, equipment issues)
- How they're performing (brief, informal feedback)

#### **Monthly:**

- Company performance (are we busy? Slow? Growing?)
- Recognition of achievements and milestones
- Upcoming events, training, or changes
- Opportunities for input on problems or improvements

#### **Quarterly/Annually:**

- Strategic direction and business goals
- Benefits updates or changes
- Policy revisions and reasons for them
- Industry trends affecting the company



## **Communication Channels That Work**

### **For Drivers:**

- Daily pre-shift briefings or texts
- Reliable dispatcher/manager phone access
- Monthly driver meetings (in-person or virtual)
- Bulletin boards in driver areas (yes, still effective)
- Group texts for urgent, broadcast information only

### **For Mechanics:**

- Daily shop huddles (10 minutes to review priorities)
- Work order systems that communicate clearly
- Direct supervisor check-ins
- Monthly shop meetings
- Access to technical service bulletins and updates

### **For Administrative, Sales & Tourism Professionals:**

- Morning team huddles or daily email updates
- Regular one-on-ones with a supervisor
- Team meetings to coordinate and problem-solve
- Shared digital workspaces for collaboration
- Clear email subject lines and communication norms

## **Making Career Paths Real**

Earlier in this guide, we outlined the specific career paths that exist within the motorcoach and group travel industry. Simply charting a path, however, is not enough; the true power of career pathing lies in its execution.

For employees across all roles—from drivers and mechanics to sales professionals and hospitality staff—a visible future is the single most effective retention tool an organization possesses. When a company actively turns a theoretical career ladder into a concrete action plan, it moves beyond reactive 'recruitment' and begins proactive 'retention.' These foundational practices ensure your team sees their long-term future with your company, transforming ambition into loyalty.

### **Document the paths:**

- Write down the progression for each role



- Specify skills/certifications required at each level
- Clarify typical timeline expectations (but allow for individual pace)
- Share these documents with all employees

#### **Provide stepping stones:**

- Break big jumps into smaller, achievable steps
- Offer training, certifications, or mentoring at each stage
- Create "working supervisor" or "lead" roles to give people developmental experience
- Pay for relevant education or certification programs

#### **Communicate opportunities:**

- Post internal openings before advertising externally
- Encourage employees to express interest in advancement
- Have regular career development conversations (not just annual reviews)
- Celebrate promotions publicly to show that advancement is real

#### **Be realistic:**

- Not everyone can or wants to advance into management
- Technical/specialist tracks are valuable too (master mechanic, senior driver)
- Be honest when opportunities are limited
- Help employees develop skills valuable elsewhere if you can't promote them (better to retain them in current role than lose them)

**Quick Win:** In your next one-on-one with each employee, ask: "Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years? What can we do to help you get there?" Take notes. Follow up with a development plan.

#### **Company Policies and Procedures: Clear Rules, Fairly Applied**

*Unclear, inconsistent, or unfair policies drive people away. Well-designed policies provide structure that helps people succeed.*

#### **The Purpose of Policies**

##### **Good policies:**

- Set clear expectations for behavior and performance
- Ensure consistency and fairness in decision-making



- Protect both employees and the company legally
- Create a structure that reduces confusion and conflict
- Define consequences for violations

#### **Bad policies:**

- Are vague or contradictory
- Aren't consistently enforced
- Punish the many for the sins of the few
- Create more problems than they solve
- Haven't been updated in years and no longer reflect reality

### **Essential Policy Categories**

#### **1. Attendance and Punctuality**

- Clear definition of on-time (15 minutes early for drivers to complete pre-trip?)
- Process for reporting absence or lateness
- Consequences for violations (progressive discipline)
- Distinction between excused and unexcused absences
- Accommodation for legitimate emergencies

#### **2. Conduct and Behavior**

- Harassment and discrimination policy (with reporting procedure)
- Workplace violence prevention
- Drug and alcohol policy (especially DOT requirements)
- Use of company property and equipment
- Social media and public representation of company
- Conflict of interest and outside employment

#### **3. Safety**

- Required PPE and safety equipment
- Accident and injury reporting
- Vehicle inspection requirements
- Hazardous materials handling
- Emergency procedures
- Disciplinary consequences for safety violations

#### **4. Performance Standards**



- Job-specific expectations (e.g., drivers: clean vehicle, pre-trip inspection, professional appearance)
- Quality standards and evaluation criteria
- Progressive discipline process
- Performance improvement plans
- Grounds for immediate termination

## 5. Time Off and Leave

- Vacation accrual and scheduling
- Sick leave
- FMLA and other protected leaves
- Bereavement leave
- Jury duty and voting leave
- Holiday schedule and pay

## 6. Compensation and Benefits

- Pay periods and method
- Overtime eligibility and calculation
- Benefits eligibility and enrollment
- Expense reimbursement
- Pay increase criteria (if applicable)

## Policy Best Practices

### Creating policies:

- Involve frontline employees in policy development when possible
- Consider real scenarios and unintended consequences
- Write in plain language, not legalese
- Ensure consistency with federal, state, and local laws
- Have legal review when appropriate (especially DOT, ADA, FMLA)

### Communicating policies:

- Provide written handbook to all employees (paper or electronic)
- Review key policies during orientation
- Post important policies visibly in workplace
- Explain *why* policies exist, not just what they say
- Provide policy updates promptly when changes occur



- Ensure non-English speakers understand policies (translation if needed)

### Enforcing policies:

- Apply rules consistently regardless of tenure, position, or popularity
- Document violations and discipline in personnel files
- Follow progressive discipline (verbal warning → written → suspension → termination) unless offense warrants immediate action
- Allow employees to tell their side of the story
- Train supervisors on proper policy enforcement
- Audit periodically to ensure consistency

### Updating policies:

- Review policies annually or when problems arise
- Remove outdated or unused policies
- Adjust based on operational reality, legal changes, or employee feedback
- Communicate changes clearly with effective date
- Get acknowledgment that employees received updated policies

**The fatal mistake:** Having policies you don't enforce. This breeds disrespect, claims of favoritism, and legal vulnerability. Either enforce your policies consistently or change them to reflect what you're actually willing to do.

**Quick Win:** Read your employee handbook as if you're a new employee. Is it clear? Current? Written in a way that makes you want to work here? If not, it's time for a revision.

### Tracking and Trending: Who Is Leaving and Why

*You can't improve retention without measuring it and understanding the patterns.*

### Key Metrics to Track

#### 1. Overall Turnover Rate

Formula: (Number of separations / Average number of employees) × 100

*Track:*

- Monthly and annually
- By department or role (drivers vs. mechanics vs. office)





- Voluntary vs. involuntary separations
- Industry benchmarks for comparison

## **2. New Hire Retention**

- What percentage of new hires remain after 30, 60, 90, and 180 days?
- This metric identifies onboarding problems

## **3. Tenure at Separation**

- How long do people stay before leaving?
- Leaving in first 90 days = hiring or onboarding problem
- Leaving at 1-2 years = career growth or compensation problem
- Leaving at 5+ years = often life circumstances, not company issues

## **4. Exit Reasons**

- Categorize why people leave (better pay, schedule, relocation, retirement, performance termination, etc.)
- Look for patterns and trends

## **5. Quality of Hires**

- What percentage of new hires meet performance expectations?
- Are certain recruiting sources producing better hires?
- Is turnover higher among certain hiring managers' teams?

## **6. Cost of Turnover**

- Calculate using the 3x salary multiplier
- Understand the financial impact to justify retention investments

## **How to Track Effectively**

### **Systems and tools:**

- Use HRIS (Human Resources Information System) if you have one
- If not, maintain a simple spreadsheet with:
  - Employee name, hire date, position
  - Separation date and reason
  - Supervisor/department
  - Performance level at departure



- Exit interview summary
- Update immediately when someone leaves (memories fade quickly)

### **Regular analysis:**

- Monthly: Review who left and immediate reasons
- Quarterly: Analyze trends and patterns
- Annually: Comprehensive review with year-over-year comparison

### **What to Look For in the Data**

#### **Red flags:**

- Turnover higher in one department (supervisor problem?)
- Consistent exits at same tenure point (compensation issue at that level?)
- Similar exit reasons across multiple departures (systemic problem)
- Higher turnover among certain demographics (discrimination or inclusion problem?)
- Spike in departures after specific event (policy change, leadership change, etc.)

#### **Positive indicators:**

- Turnover rate declining year over year
- New hire retention improving
- Exit reasons shifting from controllable to uncontrollable factors
- Long-tenured employees staying and referring others

### **Acting on What You Learn**

#### **Example scenario:**

*Data shows:* 60% of drivers leave within the first 6 months, citing "job not what I expected" and "schedule unpredictability."

#### *Root cause investigation:*

- Interview recent driver hires (those who stayed and those who left)
- Review hiring process—what are we promising vs. reality?
- Examine onboarding—are we preparing them adequately?
- Analyze scheduling practices—what's causing unpredictability?



### *Action plan:*

- Revise job posting to be more realistic about schedule demands
- Add ride-along day during interview process so candidates see reality
- Extend driver onboarding from 2 weeks to 4 weeks
- Implement 2-week schedule advance notice minimum
- Assign dedicated mentor for first 90 days

### *Measurement:*

- Track 6-month retention rate monthly
- Target: Improve from 40% to 65% within one year
- Monitor whether exit reasons change

**Quick Win:** If you're not currently tracking turnover systematically, start today with a simple spreadsheet. Log everyone who leaves for the next 6 months with basic data. Patterns will emerge quickly, pointing you toward the highest-impact retention improvements.

## **Putting It All Together: Your 12-Month Retention Action Plan**

*Improving retention is a marathon, not a sprint. Here's a realistic roadmap:*

### **Months 1-3: Assessment and Foundation**

- Calculate current turnover rate and costs
- Conduct stay interviews or engagement survey
- Review and update job descriptions and hiring process
- Audit onboarding program and create 90-day plans for each role
- Establish turnover tracking system
- Identify 3 quick wins from employee feedback and implement them

### **Months 4-6: Building Systems**

- Implement formal orientation and onboarding program
- Launch leadership training for supervisors
- Document and communicate career paths
- Review and update key policies in employee handbook
- Create recognition program or improve existing one
- Establish regular communication cadences (huddles, meetings, etc.)



## Months 7-9: Culture Work

- Address any toxic leaders or persistent problem employees
- Implement stay interview or engagement survey (if not done in Q1)
- Review compensation vs. market and adjust if needed
- Launch inclusion initiatives or training
- Create employee feedback mechanism (suggestion system, etc.)
- Celebrate progress and share retention improvements with team

## Months 10-12: Refinement and Sustainability

- Analyze full year of turnover data for trends
- Conduct comprehensive exit interview analysis
- Refine onboarding based on new hire feedback
- Update career paths and development plans
- Plan next year's retention priorities
- Recognize and reward leaders with best retention

## Ongoing: Never Stop

- Weekly: Check in with new hires and struggling employees
- Monthly: Review turnover numbers and exit reasons
- Quarterly: Analyze trends and adjust tactics
- Annually: Comprehensive engagement survey and retention assessment

## Retention Starts with You

*The motorcoach and group travel industry will always have challenges: demanding schedules, physical work, competitive pressures, and seasonality. You can't eliminate these realities.*

## What you can control:

- Who you hire and how you welcome them
- Whether people feel valued and respected
- The quality of leadership and communication
- Whether employees see a future worth staying for

**The companies winning the retention battle aren't doing one big thing—they're doing many small things consistently well.**



Start where you are. Pick three initiatives from this guide that resonate most with your specific challenges. Implement them well. Measure results. Build from there.

**Your employees are your competitive advantage.** Treat them like it.

### Quick Reference: Top 10 Retention Best Practices

1. **Hire for fit, not just qualifications** - Cultural alignment predicts retention better than skills alone
2. **Extend onboarding beyond orientation** - 90 days of structured integration, not 2 days of paperwork
3. **Train your leaders** - Supervisors make or break retention; invest in developing them
4. **Communicate constantly and consistently** - Silence breeds distrust and rumors
5. **Create clear career paths** - Show people a future or they'll find one elsewhere
6. **Act on feedback** - Ask for input, then actually do something with what you hear
7. **Recognize and appreciate** - People need to know their contributions matter
8. **Provide quality equipment and tools** - Respect people enough to give them what they need to succeed
9. **Be fair and consistent** - Nothing drives turnover faster than perceived favoritism
10. **Track your data** - Measure turnover, understand patterns, fix root causes

***Remember: Every employee who stays is one less position to recruit, one less person to train, and one more ambassador for your company in the community. Retention is not an expense—it's an investment that pays compounding returns.***



### Executive Leadership: Your Role in Workforce Development

As a senior executive, leading the development of your workforce is a critical business strategy that establishes the cultural tone and reinforces desired behaviors. Executives should view workforce development as a strategic investment.



This section highlights the executive's vital responsibility in this process, stressing that it is a core business strategy, not just an HR function. It begins by addressing common misconceptions about executive involvement, followed by **13 Executive Actions** that directly link leadership decisions—from measuring turnover and setting culture to strategic investments and succession planning—to improved business performance, safety, and industry competitiveness.

Before diving into the actions, we must first address some of the deeply rooted, yet false, assumptions about an executive's role in workforce success.

 <b>THE MISCONCEPTION</b>	 <b>THE REALITY</b>
<i>"It's just fancy HR stuff"</i>	<i>It's creating systems that help your people grow YOUR business</i>
<i>"My managers handle people stuff"</i>	<i>Culture flows from the top - your involvement determines success</i>
<i>"We've got great culture already"</i>	<i>Exit interviews and turnover data tell the real story</i>
<i>"We're too small for this"</i>	<i>Small companies benefit most - one great employee transforms operations</i>
<i>"I just need drivers who show up"</i>	<i>Developing employees reduces turnover, improves safety, cuts costs</i>
<i>"Training is too expensive"</i>	<i>Turnover costs 3x more than development programs</i>
<i>"This is for big corporate offices"</i>	<i>Family businesses need succession planning even more</i>

## 13 Executive Actions That Drive Business Performance

In the introduction on page five, there were 7 Key Themes supporting workforce development. This section will have 13 Executive Actions that link to those themes.



Implementing even a few of these actions into your business strategy can create an immediate and tangible difference in performance and culture.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: 7 KEY THEMES & EXECUTIVE ACTIONS LINKAGE MAP

### ABA Driving Force Council Reference Guide

Workforce development is the strategic coordination of education, training, and support initiatives that equip individuals with skills to meet business demands while strengthening organizational performance.

✓ = Primary Connection    • = Supporting Connection

13 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS	Career Growth	Skills & Training	Recruit & Retention	Talent Pipeline	Performance	Inclusive Culture	Future Ready
<b>1. Calculate Turnover Costs</b> <i>Measure true cost of departures</i>	•		✓		✓		•
<b>2. Executive Dashboard</b> <i>Track workforce metrics</i>	•	•	✓	•	✓	•	✓
<b>3. Safety Data to Insurance</b> <i>Link improvements to cost savings</i>		✓			✓		•
<b>4. Show Up for Training</b> <i>Personal presence sets tone</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	
<b>5. 24-48 Hour Rule</b> <i>Respond quickly to HR issues</i>			•		•	✓	
<b>6. Career Pathways</b> <i>Create advancement paths</i>	✓						•
<b>7. Revenue Positions</b> <i>Invest in growth roles</i>		•	✓	•	✓	•	•
<b>8. Enterprise Risk</b> <i>Manage workforce risks</i>					•	✓	•
<b>9. Compensation Strategy</b> <i>Benchmark across industries</i>	✓	•	✓		✓	•	
<b>10. Empower Leaders</b> <i>Delegate tactics, own strategy</i>	✓		✓	•	✓	✓	•
<b>11. Education Partners</b> <i>Build talent pipelines</i>	✓	✓	•	✓			✓
<b>12. Technology Investment</b> <i>Enhance with smart tools</i>		•			•		✓
<b>13. Succession Planning</b> <i>Develop future leaders</i>	✓						✓

### Why These 13 Actions Matter to You

- Your personal and business reputation depends on how you treat employees
- The talent, technical and employee shortage isn't going away - you need every advantage



- Your competitors who figure this out will have an advantage
- This is an important part of your business strategy
- There are measurable financial implications and savings that you can achieve

## Section I: The Business Case

### ACTION 1: Calculate Your Turnover Costs

You can't manage what you don't measure. Most executives dramatically underestimate the true cost of employee turnover. Moving from 40% to 20% turnover can save money, time and resources while improving quality and customer service. This calculation justifies every workforce investment you'll make.

- Calculate the cost per hire by position: advertising, recruiting time, background checks, training and lost productivity. To fully evaluate, think of issues new employees have that impact customer service, safety, quality and the benefits once they are fully trained.
- Track time-to-productivity: how long before new hires reach full performance (typically 90-180 days)
- Document the multiplier effect: one bad hire costs 3x their salary in turnover, mistakes, and damaged morale

### ACTION 2: Establish Your Executive Workforce Dashboard

What gets measured gets done. A simple executive dashboard brings workforce metrics into your regular business reviews alongside financial and operational KPIs. This visibility drives accountability and enables data-driven decisions about where to invest in your people.

- Track 5 essential metrics monthly: turnover rate, open position days, safety incidents per hire cohort, cost per hire, and employee satisfaction score
- When employees in important operations roles, or high turnover positions leave, knowing the reason is important. Make sure exit summaries are part of your dashboard.
- As companies grow, it is important to make sure new positions are controlled. Each hire should be budgeted and approved.
- Review quarterly trends: engagement scores, internal promotion rates, training ROI, and revenue per employee





- Set improvement targets: **reduce turnover 10% annually, fill positions within 30 days, achieve 85%+ satisfaction, reduce accidents per mile or lost-time workplace injuries or preventable safety events.**

### **ACTION 3: Connect Safety Performance to Insurance Costs (and other direct)**

Workforce quality has a measurable, direct impact on your bottom line. Organizations who invest in strong role-specific training and behaviour monitoring can reduce risk and the costs associated with it. Operators who invest in strong driver training, continuous behavior monitoring, and a robust safety culture successfully reduce risk, which translates explicitly into lower insurance premiums and significant bottom-line savings.

- Look at insurance or accident data by hire date, compare incident rates between experienced vs. new drivers
- Implement behavior-based safety programs: monitoring systems, coaching, recognition for safe performance
- Share results with your insurance broker: document improvements to negotiate better rates
- Expand safety accountability to more than drivers, shop, office, everyone can have a role and lost-time is a significant cost for all employers and needs to have focus by all employees.
- Formalize safety-related disciplinary systems and policy. These could typically be event-based, involving coaching sessions for events flagged by the driver monitoring system (e.g., cell phone use, speeding, rolling stop). A rolling 12-to-24-month view of safety incidents can be used, or for each event based on your process. It is important that processes are consistent. Drivers with a certain number of issues or points over a rolling period should be sent back for retraining focused on those specific issues. This policy must be discussed clearly during training and orientation as part of a strong safety culture, reinforced by showing metrics like accident rates to highlight improvements. For example with cell phone use many companies implement either a ZERO tolerance policy or a clear 'strike' system (e.g., 2 or 3 strikes resulting in termination). Including this discussion and training in orientation and onboarding is an important part of ensuring this is part of the expectation and safety culture. Sharing metrics visibly, such as safety scores or accidents per mile can be great reinforcement.

## **Section II: Your Direct Leadership Responsibilities**



## **Culture Starts and Stops with You**

### **ACTION 4: Show Up for Onboarding and Training and Engage in it!**

An executive's commitment must be visible. Your presence during new hire orientation and key training sessions sends a powerful message about what matters in your organization. Employees remember when the owner took 15 minutes to welcome them personally. This isn't delegation - it's setting the cultural tone that your team will follow.

- Welcome every new hire class personally: even if it's just 10-15 minutes to explain company values and expectations. Be consistent and try to continually reinforce important themes.
- Attend regular meetings.
- Host annual, or periodic all-hands meetings: share business results, recognize achievements and answer questions directly.
- Set expectations regarding safety and how training and reinforcement will be handled as part of setting the tone for culture.

### **ACTION 5: Apply the 24-48 Hour Rule to Important Employee or HR Issues**

Critical workforce issues require rapid executive response. When serious safety incidents, harassment complaints, or key employee departures occur, your personal involvement within 24-48 hours demonstrates that people matter. Delayed response signals that these issues aren't priorities - and your managers will mirror that negligence.

- Define issues requiring immediate notification: serious accidents, harassment claims, unexpected key employee resignations.
- To maintain a respectful workplace, implement clear and separate reporting channels for serious concerns such as discrimination, bullying, and sexual harassment, and strictly enforce anti-retaliation protocols. For reported items, ensure investigation processes are known, including confidentiality. Many companies are unaware of the risk that exists in this area.
- Personally follow up on exit interviews: speak with departing employees to understand the real reasons they are leaving. For some companies, a follow-up with HR is necessary.
- Create upward feedback channels: anonymous surveys, skip-level meetings, and an open door policy that actually works.



## **ACTION 6: Build Clear Career Pathways**

Employees stay when they see a future. Creating visible career ladders from entry-level to leadership positions gives your people hope and direction. This isn't complicated - it's a simple chart, as shown in the career path section of this document, showing how an entry level role progresses to leadership positions, for example a van driver becomes a motorcoach operator, then dispatcher, then operations manager. Share it in recruiting and review it annually with every employee.

- Map progression for every role: driver to supervisor, mechanic apprentice to shop manager, front desk to sales director
- Post promotion criteria publicly: make requirements transparent so Hu employees know exactly what's needed to advance
- Celebrate internal promotions: announce them company-wide to show that growth opportunities are real
- When possible, look first for internal promotions. Make sure to share information when it happens.

## **Section III: Strategic Workforce Decisions**

### **Investments Only You Can Make**

#### **ACTION 7: Identify Revenue-Unlocking Positions Focus On Organizational Design**

The false economy of understaffing kills growth. This is a common issue that companies face as they grow. As the organization expands, a common theme is "we've got this", but there are risks of short-cuts or overworked team members. That missing dispatcher limits you to current capacity. The unfilled sales position means lost opportunities. Executives need to identify which positions unlock revenue and invest ahead of demand. Investing in Workforce Development leads to increased profitability. Calculate the revenue impact of key positions - often a \$60K salary generates \$500K+ in additional revenue.

- Review your bottlenecks, most challenging positions or revenue generating functions
- Calculate opportunity cost: what business are you turning down due to staffing limitations?
- Invest ahead of demand: hire growth-enabling positions 3-6 months before you think you need them



- Align investment with profit. Invest in training to strengthen roles that drive review and company performance.
- Don't keep piling on work to your best employees, while accepting poor performance for others. This is a quick way to demotivate them and other employees. Take action and have the right people in the right positions.

### **ACTION 8: Manage Enterprise Risk Through Workforce**

Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) is identifying and mitigating threats to your business. Workforce issues - harassment claims, safety incidents, cyber security and email/internet fraud, weather, pandemic - represent significant risk. HR and personnel issues are very important to address as there may be elevated liability and each state has varied laws. Owner or Board-level risk reporting must include workforce metrics alongside financial and operational risks.

- Implement zero-tolerance harassment policies: consistent enforcement protects employees and limits legal exposure
- Track leading indicators: complaint rates, exit interview themes, near-miss safety reports, legal claims
- Prepare crisis response plans: have protocols ready for serious accidents or workplace issues, or public relations crises. ABA has resources available in this area.

### **ACTION 9: Benchmark Compensation Strategically**

You're not just competing with your direct industry, you are competing with other sectors. For motorcoach operators - you're competing with trucking, manufacturing, and every industry that needs CDL drivers or skilled labor. Strategic compensation means surveying adjacent industries, considering total compensation (not just wages), and making deliberate decisions about where to lead, match, or lag the market. This strategic view also applies to attracting and retaining talent across the entire group travel ecosystem, including specialized roles in tour planning, sales, and hospitality that are crucial to our industry's success.

- Survey multiple industries: compare your pay for key roles to other related industries. Compare driver pay to trucking companies, your mechanic wages to dealerships, restaurant managers to hotel sales managers
- Calculate total compensation: include benefits, PTO, development opportunities, and work-life balance value



- Make strategic choices: decide which positions to pay premium rates to attract top talent

## Section IV: Enabling Your Organization

Connecting to Other Committees

### **ACTION 10: Empower Your Leadership Team**

You can't do this alone - but you can't fully delegate it either. The key is knowing what to delegate (tactical recruitment, training delivery, policy implementation) versus what to own (culture setting, strategic decisions, crisis response).

- Define clear ownership: which workforce decisions require your approval vs. manager authority
- Create manager accountability: measure managers by their team's turnover, engagement, safety, and development
- Conduct quarterly workforce reviews: make data-driven workforce discussions as routine as financial reviews

### **ACTION 11: Partner with Educational Institutions, Industry Partners & Associations**

You don't have to build training infrastructure alone. Community colleges, technical schools, and workforce development boards want to partner with employers. These partnerships create talent pipelines, share training costs, and position you as an industry leader. Your involvement opens doors that your HR manager can't access.

- Meet with local college presidents: discuss CDL programs, hospitality training, maintenance certifications
- Offer paid internships and apprenticeships: create pipelines while sharing costs with educational partners
- Join workforce development boards: influence regional training priorities and access grant funding

## Section V: Future-Proofing Decisions

Building for Tomorrow

### **ACTION 12: Invest in Technology Thoughtfully**



Technology should enhance your workforce, not replace it. Scheduling software, digital training platforms, and data analytics free employees from administrative tasks for higher-value work. The key is training your team to use new systems - don't assume digital natives automatically understand business technology. Balance efficiency gains with human capability. Ensure you are looking at AI solutions to benefit your business.

- Prioritize workforce-enabling technology: scheduling tools, training platforms, communication systems that make jobs easier
- Budget for training: Allocate a percentage of technology investment to the training and support needed to use it.
- Measure adoption and impact: track usage rates, time savings, and employee satisfaction with new systems
- Provide guidance on prioritizing workforce-enabling technology, establishing budgets for training on new systems and creating clerk risk management policies for emerging technology.
- Make sure to train all generations - related to the next topics, ensuring generational transition means looking at and knowing the benefit. If you are less tech savvy, get training by those who are using new tools and creating new ways to do things.
- Review data privacy, intellectual property risks and ethical use policies.
- Since AI is top of mind, make sure your team is using it. Share ideas and know (and approve) what data you are sharing. Many companies will be formalizing AI policies in the next year.

### **ACTION 13: Build Your Legacy Through Succession Planning**

Who runs the company when you're gone - temporarily or permanently? Family businesses especially need succession planning. This involves identifying and developing future leaders for essential positions, establishing strategies for knowledge transfer, mentoring crucial talent, and planning transitions that span multiple generations. Your legacy depends on developing people who can carry the business forward.

- Identify successors for every critical role: who's your backup for operations, finance, sales, safety?
- Create structured development programs: what experiences, training, and mentoring do successors need to be ready?
- Leverage the next generation to find new ways to do things, and look for new technology to support and advance the business.
- Document institutional knowledge: capture critical relationships, processes, and expertise before key people retire



The executive commitment supports a foundation for our next step: communicating this value to the outside world. We will now examine how the Marketing & Communications strategy ties together all elements—from DEI and Recruitment to Onboarding—to share our industry's message effectively.

## Marketing & Communications: The External Voice of Workforce Development

A marketing plan is a vital roadmap for any business, aligning all activities with business objectives and enabling the measurable tracking of performance. While the specifics of each company's plan will vary, effective communication is the core element that translates a company's workforce vision into tangible, measurable outcomes.

### A robust plan:

- **Drives Strategic Recruitment & Retention:** Creating a positive and appealing public image helps attract new talent and reinforces pride for current employees.
- **Cultivates an Inclusive Culture:** Through inclusive and intentional marketing efforts
- **Supports Executive Strategy:** An effective communication strategy is a core responsibility of executive leadership. It aligns with the executive strategy to invest in technology thoughtfully and identify revenue-unlocking positions.
- **Advertises Career Growth:** By visually presenting clear advancement paths (e.g., Driver to Manager) and long-term 90-180 day onboarding plans, the marketing message attracts career-minded talent who seek long-term investment.
- **Reinforces Employer Transparency:** Incorporates realistic job previews and honesty about job challenges into the recruitment message, which sets the stage for retention by ensuring a "right fit" from the start and building a reputation for integrity.

### Tactics to Improve Your Marketing:

- **Implement Targeted Digital Advertising:** Move beyond simply posting on social media. Utilize platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook/Instagram, and industry-specific job boards (like those offered by associations) to run paid campaigns. These campaigns should be targeted by:



- **Geography:** To reach candidates in specific hiring zones.
- **Demographics/Interests:** To reach non-traditional employee segments (e.g., veterans, second-career seekers, or people with high-volume customer service experience).
- **Optimize Career Page for Search (SEO):** Ensure the company career page is easily found by prospective candidates who are using search engines.
  - Use common job titles and phrases (e.g., "CDL driver training near me," "motorcoach operations management jobs") in page titles and content.
  - Make the site mobile-friendly and fast, as many candidates search on their phones.
- **Leverage Video Beyond "Company Culture":**
  - **Role Spotlights:** Short, 60-second "Day in the Life" videos for key roles (Driver, Maintenance Tech, Tour Planner) featuring actual employees.
  - **"Why I Stayed" Testimonials:** Videos that highlight the career advancement paths or mentorship programs mentioned in the guide, reinforcing retention efforts.
- **Formalize an Employee Referral Program:** A structured program with clear, attractive rewards (e.g., financial bonuses, extra paid time off, public recognition) is a powerful communication channel. This turns every employee into a recruiter and promotes the company's culture organically.
- **Create a "Brand Ambassador" Program:** Identify enthusiastic, long-tenured employees who can represent the company at job fairs, community events, and in recruitment videos, sharing their authentic story and sense of belonging.
- **Internal Communications of Success:** Regularly share stories internally about employee promotions, new training completions, and staff milestones. This reinforces the career path structure and shows current employees that loyalty and performance are rewarded, which in turn fuels their positive external messaging.





## APPENDIX A: ABA GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### AD HOC TOUR

A packaged travel product provided by an operator as a one-time occurrence, e.g., a tour to the Summer Olympics.

### APPOINTMENT

A seven-minute, face-to-face meeting that occurs during a Marketplace business session. Each business session consists of 54 appointments. Slots are prescheduled prior to Marketplace by computer, matching Buyer and Seller requests. Additional appointments may be scheduled on-site. A list of prescheduled appointments is sent to each appointment-taking delegate prior to Marketplace. Buyer appointment-taking delegates also receive a book of prescheduled appointments at Registration. Seller appointment-taking delegates will need to print their appointments and bring them to Marketplace, as they will not be given a copy at Registration.

### APPOINTMENT REQUEST – MUTUAL

An appointment request submitted synonymously by a Buyer (Motorcoach/Tour Operator) and a Seller (Travel Industry Supplier), to meet with one another at a prescheduled Marketplace business session.

### APPOINTMENT REQUEST – BUYER

An appointment request submitted by a Buyer (Motorcoach/Tour Operator) to meet with a Seller (Travel Industry Supplier), at a prescheduled Marketplace business session.

### APPOINTMENT REQUEST – SELLER

An appointment request submitted by a Seller (Travel Industry Supplier) to meet

with a Buyer (Motorcoach/Tour Operator), at a prescheduled Marketplace business session.

### APPOINTMENT-TAKING DELEGATE

A Buyer or Seller permitted to conduct appointments at Marketplace during their assigned business session.

### ASSOCIATE MEMBER

An ABA membership category designation for a supplier of goods and services to the motorcoach industry, to include bus manufacturers, equipment companies, insurance carriers, etc.

### ATTRACTION, FOOD SERVICE AND RECEPTIVE OPERATOR MEMBER

ABA membership category designations for travel industry suppliers to the motorcoach industry, such as a historic/natural/manufactured site or activity and to include museums, theme parks, casinos, shopping or entertainment venues, restaurants, rail/passengers vessels, receptive tour services, etc.

### BUYER DELEGATE

The designation is given to Motorcoach and Tour Operators who attend Marketplace to meet with travel industry suppliers (Sellers) to foster business relationships and plan future charters and tours.

### BUYER DELEGATE/ APPOINTMENT-TAKING DELEGATE

A Motorcoach and Tour Operator permitted to conduct Marketplace appointments during their assigned business session.

### BUYER DELEGATE/ ROTATION DELEGATE



A Motorcoach and Tour Operator who alternates the Marketplace appointment responsibilities with another company Buyer registrant. Buyers can send one rotation delegate for every appointment-taking delegate registered.

## CATALOG

Printed material produced by a motorcoach/tour/wholesale operator to promote their public tour product. This publication may be distributed to travel agents, affinity groups and other tour operators. The catalog description typically offers an itinerary listing of the destination, attractions and activities; departure dates and duration of the tour; and the terms of sale and any disclaimers. Some brochures may list travel suppliers utilized.

## CATALOG TOUR

Also referred to as a Public, Per Capita, Retail, Scheduled Tour. A packaged travel product provided by an operator and sold to the public, either directly or through travel agents. Individuals participating in such a tour do not know each other or share a common bond prior to travel. (Also see Series Tour)

## CHARTER

A person or an affinity group, such as a bank club, organization, church, school, team, etc., that contracts (hires) a motorcoach for its exclusive use. The motorcoach operator providing the equipment for charter may or may not be involved in selecting tour vendors, such as lodging, meals, sightseeing or attractions.

## CITY TOUR

A narrated sightseeing excursion by motorcoach (or alternate transportation) during which a tour guide/escort provides anecdotes, facts and historical information on the area, sites and attractions. The

duration of the tour varies from one hour to a half or a full day, which may or may not include disembarkment at the various points of interest.

## CVB (CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU)

Also known as a Convention and Visitors Association or Authority. A nonprofit organization supported by membership fee, room tax, user fee, government budget allocations or any combination of these funding mechanisms. Typically, this organization solicits convention, group, tour and transient travel revenues for their area businesses. (also see DMO)

## CUSTOM TOUR

Also referred to as Preformed Tour or Group Tour. A packaged travel product provided by an operator and sold to an organized group whose members share a common bond, interest or organizational affiliation, such as a church, school, club, etc. A preformed group is also referred to as an affinity group. (Also see Group Leader, Group Rates, Tiered Pricing, and Ad Hoc Tour)

## DMO (DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION)

An ABA membership category designation for a travel industry supplier to the motorcoach industry, which promotes a city, region, state, province or country for tourism. This organization is funded by membership fee, room tax, user fee, government budget allocations or any combination of these financial sources. (Also see CVB)

## DAY TRIP

A one-day tour to a nearby city/area or attraction which may include meals but does not require overnight accommodations. A Day Trip could be an excursion to a theme park, museum,



theater, and entertainment venue or shopping/outlet mall.

#### DELEGATE DEPOT

A Marketplace service area available to all delegates to research all registered companies. Also, office supplies, copiers, computers and charging stations are available to all delegates. This is now a part of the Marketplace Service Center.

#### DESTINATIONS MAGAZINE

Chock-full of useful tour-planning tips, ABA's Destinations magazine is a full-color, bimonthly publication. This magazine of North American motorcoach tours and travel offers feature articles highlighting exciting group itineraries, profiles of ABA-member companies, and business articles that can help improve operators' bottom-line.

#### DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL

The means of delivering product/service to the end-user, the tour passenger. These channels are dependent on the type and size of the motorcoach/tour company, and the number of travel industry suppliers utilized to fulfill the tour product/service. (See Catalog Tour, Group Leader, Travel Industry Member)

#### ESCORTED TOUR

A travel package which includes the professional service of a trained tour escort/director, which travels with and assists travelers during their excursion. The tour director ensures service fulfillment of itinerary arrangements including sightseeing, attractions, accommodations and restaurants. A tour escort/director represents the motorcoach/tour operator. (Also see Receptive Operator)

#### FAM TOUR (FAMILIARIZATION TOUR)

A comprehensive sightseeing trip

sponsored by Travel Industry Suppliers to educate, promote and entice tourism revenues through tour operators, travel writers, travel agents or group leaders.

#### F.I.T. (FOREIGN INDEPENDENT TRAVELER OR FULLY INCLUSIVE TOUR)

A person(s) who purchases an independent tour package that may include travel elements such as transportation, sightseeing, dining and lodging. This type of traveler wants an organized tour product with the freedom to travel without the confines of a group movement.

#### GUIDE

A professional person hired by a motorcoach/tour operator to conduct a narrative tour (guide speak) of a specific locality, area or attraction. Some jurisdictions require that a guide be licensed. (Also see Step-on Guide, Receptive Operator)

#### GUIDE SPEAK

A narrative commentary, including historical, cultural and educational information, presented by tour guide/step-on guide to enhance the tour participants sightseeing experience.

#### HOTEL/MOTEL MEMBER

An ABA membership category designation for a travel industry supplier to the motorcoach industry, to include individual lodging establishments, hotel management companies and national lodging chains.

#### HUB AND SPOKE ITINERARY

A tour that utilizes a central destination (hub) and supplements the itinerary with day excursions (spoke) to other area sites, attractions, restaurants, and shopping or entertainment venues. This type of itinerary works well in areas where sightseeing and activities are highly



concentrated within a reasonable driving distance.

#### INBOUND INTERNATIONAL TOUR

A tour (often intermodal) originating from a foreign country, thereby, traveling in to visit a country/destination. Such a tour may be operated by a tour company or is generated by an international tour operator or agency and then serviced by a domestic operator as receptive or charter provider. Hosting inbound international tourism requires additional servicing considerations including foreign consumer protection laws, foreign currency exchange, language translations, and foreign customs, dietary and cultural expectations.

#### INTERMODAL TOUR

A tour itinerary utilizing two or more modes of transportation such as motorcoach, air carrier, rail or passenger vessel. (e.g., a tour that departs by motorcoach and returns by air)

#### ITINERARY

A planned routing schedule that details the time, location and all other pertinent information necessary to create and conduct a tour.

#### LINE RUN

Also known as Scheduled Service. Specified, predetermined regular-route bus service between cities or terminals provided by a motorcoach operator.

#### LOAD FACTOR

The number of customers booked on a tour, versus the maximum number of tour passengers that can be accommodated on the motorcoach, based on the type of equipment used. A load factor determines the break-even point for profit.

#### LOCAL RECEPTIVE OPERATOR

Local services provided by a Local Receptive may include meet and greet, sightseeing, ground transportation and vendor selection. Local Receptive Operators are designated as an ABA travel industry supplier member. They may also function as an agent for a Tour Operator.

#### MANAGEMENT COMPANY OR GROUP

An organization that manages a group of lodging establishments, attractions, food or retail stores/outlets/centers.

#### MARKETPLACE BUSINESS FLOOR

ABA's business session area at the host convention center, where Buyer and Seller delegates meet to conduct prescheduled appointments. Access to this area is restricted to Appointment-Takers and Business Floor delegates.

#### MARKETPLACE NETWORKING FLOOR

The all-inclusive Marketplace Networking Floor houses the Marketplace Service Center and allows you to enjoy refreshments in our expansive lounge while visiting with our numerous vendors and sponsors. The Marketplace Networking Floor is open all the time to all delegates.

#### MOTORCOACH OPERATOR

Motorcoach Operator companies own at least one motorcoach and conduct group tours.

#### NAME BADGE

A color-coded badge worn by all Marketplace attendees. The badge designates a delegate's membership category, and the business sessions, activities and events that the delegate is permitted to attend. This badge must be



worn for the duration of Marketplace week and is non-transferable. A \$100 replacement fee applies for a lost badge.

### OPEN JAW ITINERARY

A tour itinerary that originates from a geographic point and terminates at a different point. This tour may result in an intermodal tour. (Also see Intermodal Tour)

### OPERATOR BREAKFAST

A hosted Marketplace event exclusively to Motorcoach and Tour Operator Buyers held on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday mornings, prior to the day's business session.

### OPERATOR MEMBER

The ABA membership category designation for a motorcoach owner/operator or tour operator.

### ORIENTATION CENTER

Located in the Marketplace Service Center, it is a section designated for, but not limited to, first-time STAR delegates. It should be the STAR delegates' first stop after registration to attend seminars and learn valuable tips and information on ABA's seven-minute appointments and other Marketplace particulars. All delegates are welcome to come for a refresher course.

### OUTBOUND INTERNATIONAL TOUR

A tour traveling to a foreign country that involves the additional operational considerations such as immigration requirements (passports, visas, inoculation, etc.), foreign currency, language barriers and customs. An outbound international tour may be operated by a tour company or may be generated by the tour operator and serviced by a domestic operator/service provider in the foreign destination.

### PREFORMED TOUR (see Custom Tour)

### PROFILE FORM

An 8½" x 11", three hole punched sheet, exchanged by both Buyers and Sellers during Marketplace. The Buyers' profile includes a synopsis of the operation, customer base, tour product, types of tour and destinations being offered and key contacts. The Seller's profile form includes information on the facilities/services for the motorcoach/tour market, location, hours of operation, policies, rates etc. Sample profile forms are available from ABA.

### RECEPTIVE OPERATOR

A multi-faceted destination specialist whose company provides some or all components of a tour package for resale by a motorcoach/tour/wholesale operator. Tours may also be sold directly to a preformed group. Local services provided by a Local Receptive may include meet and greet, sightseeing, ground transportation and vendor selection. Receptive Operators are designated as an ABA travel industry supplier member. They may also function as an agent for a Tour Operator.

### SAMPLE ITINERARY

A suggested tour prepared by a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), to market a city/area/region as a tour stop or destination to the motorcoach/tour operator. Typically, a sample itinerary educates the operator on routing, timing, commentary, attraction and supplier information.

### SELLER DELEGATE

An ABA registration type for any Travel Industry Supplier. Sellers attend Marketplace to meet with Buyers (motorcoach/tour operator) to foster business relationships, solicit tourism





dollars, and become more knowledgeable through education seminars and networking opportunities.

### **SELLER DELEGATE – APPOINTMENT-TAKING**

A registered Travel Industry Seller permitted to conduct Marketplace appointments during their assigned business session.

### **SELLER DELEGATE – BUSINESS FLOOR**

A registered Travel Industry Supplier who is not taking appointments. Business Floor delegates may participate in all Marketplace activities, seminars and events, except pre-scheduled appointments.

### **STAR DELEGATE**

An exclusive ABA designation given to first-time Marketplace attendees. A STAR delegate's name badge is specially recognized by a blue ribbon with a star. Special education seminars and an Orientation Program have been designed for STAR delegates.

### **STEP-ON GUIDE**

A professional person contracted locally by an Operator or provided by a Receptive Operator, to conduct a narrative tour (guide speak) of a specific locality, area or attraction. A Step-on Guide provides "local color/flavor" to a tour experience.

### **TIERED RATES**

Also known as tiered pricing. A graduated rate structure designed to offer professional operators (Buyers) percentage discounts based on volume, production and/or their position in the distribution channel from wholesaler, motorcoach/tour operator, receptive operator and travel agent. Sellers providing tiered rates protect the Buyer relationship with customers and

Group Leader. Each Buyer in the distribution channel must mark up the price to realize a profit and be able to present the traveling consumer a cost-effective tour product. (Also see Group Leader, Group Rates)

### **TOUR**

A packaged travel product coordinated and executed by a motorcoach/tour operator. A tour consists of components including transportation, sightseeing/guide service, attractions, shopping, meals, entertainment, and lodging or any combination of these elements.

### **TOUR DIRECTOR**

Also known as a tour escort. An employee, or contracted representative of a motorcoach/tour operator, responsible for coordinating the daily itinerary of an escorted tour and ensuring the wellbeing of passengers.

### **TOUR PLANNER**

An employee of a tour/motorcoach company, responsible for developing a tour itinerary and/or purchasing services such as attractions, meals, lodging and transportation.

### **TOUR OPERATOR**

An ABA membership category designation for a tour operator who arranges motorcoach tours but does not own buses. Also, a general term to describe a professional company that develops a tour product and executes contracted services for groups of people. A tour operator may provide a preformed and/or public tour product. (Also see Wholesaler, Receptive Operator)

### **TOUR VOUCHERS**

Also known as tour coupons. Documents issued by a motorcoach/tour operator having a predetermined cash value and exchanged for accommodations, meals,



sightseeing and other services with contracted vendors.

#### **TOUR WHOLESALER**

Also known as a Wholesaler. A company that may or may not create the tour product and markets all-inclusive tours sold through travel agents, tours operators or to preformed groups. Wholesalers typically do not sell at retail or fulfill local

services.

#### **TRAVEL INDUSTRY MEMBER**

An ABA membership category for suppliers to the motorcoach industry including destinations, attractions, restaurants, rail/passenger vessels, hotels, local receptives, etc. (also see DMO, Attraction, Food Service and Local Receptive Operator, Hotel/Motel Member)



## APPENDIX B: DEI GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### **Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI)**

DEI stands for **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**, a framework that aims to create environments where all individuals are represented, have fair access to resources, and feel a sense of belonging and respect. Diversity is the presence of differences (e.g., race, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability), Equity is the fair distribution of resources and opportunities based on need to ensure equal outcomes, and Inclusion is the intentional effort to welcome, support, and value diverse perspectives and experiences.

### **Ability**

A person's physical, mental, or cognitive capacity to perform tasks or engage in activities. In DEI contexts, it recognizes that individuals experience the workplace differently based on their abilities and may need equitable support.

### **Advocacy**

Taking action to support, recommend, or champion a person, group, or cause—often to help remove barriers, influence change, or promote fair treatment in the workplace.

### **Binary**

A classification system with only two categories—typically male/female or man/woman. In DEI contexts, it acknowledges that this framework does not reflect the full spectrum of gender identities.

### **Diversity**

The presence of differences within a group or organization, including—but not limited to—race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, socioeconomic background, and lived experience.

### **Equity**

Providing people with the specific resources and opportunities they need to reach comparable outcomes, recognizing that individuals start from different places and may face varied barriers.

### **Equality**





Ensuring everyone has the same resources or opportunities. Unlike equity, equality assumes a level starting point and does not account for differing needs or systemic disadvantages.

### **Gender identity**

An individual's internal sense of being male, female, both or neither. This may not align with the sex assigned at birth

### **Identity and culture**

An individual's culture shapes their identity through beliefs, values and behaviours. This could be defined by ie: race/ethnicity, gender, age, status, religion, sexual orientation, religion, language, or physical ability.

### **Inclusion**

To feel valued, involved and respected for viewpoints, ideas, perspectives and the experiences they bring. The opportunity should be accessible and equitable for all.

### **Accessibility**

The opportunity to acquire the same information, engage and enjoy services no matter your ability.

### **Implicit bias**

Unconscious attitudes or stereo types that affect actions and decisions.

### **Racial and ethnic identity**

Social construct based on physical characteristics such as skin color and culture.

### **Microaggression**

brief interactions, either conscious or unconscious, that demean and/or discriminate against members of marginalized groups. These could be inappropriate jokes, rolling eyes, blatant disregard of someone while they're speaking, or other, more subtle behaviors.

### **Macroaggression**

large scale and extreme forms of aggressions towards those of a certain race, gender, culture, etc.



## **Marginalized**

When a person or group is oppressed and they are treated as insignificant and without power.

## **Neurodiversity**

The awareness that every person's brain operates differently. Neurodiversity encourages people to recognize that everyone may have different methods of learning or remembering information, as well as different ways of processing information and social interaction with others.

## **Non-binary**

denoting, having, or relating to a gender identity that does not conform to traditional binary beliefs about gender, which indicate that all individuals are exclusively either male or female.

## **Intersectionality**

the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

## **Culture**

Company culture is the shared set of values, beliefs, and practices that define an organization's unique "personality" and guide how employees interact and work together. It includes everything from formal policies to informal, unwritten rules about behaviors, attitudes, and how decisions are made, and it significantly impacts employee engagement and overall success.

## **Accountability**

the fact or condition of being accountable; responsibility

## **Beliefs**

the feeling of being certain that something exists or is true.

## **Collaboration**

the action of working with someone to produce or create something



**Institutional racism**

occurs in an organization. This includes discriminatory treatment, unfair policies, or biased practices based on race that result in equitable outcomes for whites over people of color and extend considerably beyond prejudice.

**Ethical**

Conforming to accepted standards of conduct, behavior, or moral values of a given group or society.

**Empowered**

having the knowledge, confidence, and ability to act or make decisions for oneself

**Employee wellbeing**

the state of an employee's mental, physical, emotional, and financial health, influenced by factors both inside and outside the workplace

**Inclusion**

the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources

**People-focused**

prioritizing individuals, their well-being, and growth by creating a supportive environment where they feel valued and heard

**Professional Development**

Opportunities, training, and experiences that help employees build new skills, strengthen existing abilities, and advance their careers within the organization.

**Respect**

Demonstrating consideration, dignity, and appreciation for others' perspectives, contributions, and identities. In DEI work, respect is foundational to creating a safe and inclusive workplace culture.

**Retention**

An organization's ability to keep employees over time by fostering an environment where people feel valued, supported, and motivated to stay and grow.



## Transparency

Open and honest communication about decisions, processes, and expectations.

Transparency builds trust by ensuring employees understand how and why actions are taken.

