

# Roles and Responsibilities of Transit Managers Leading the Rural Transit Agency



Provided by the Nebraska Department of Roads, Transit Section



This material is updated from the original manual "Roles and Responsibilities of Transit Managers", produced by the National RTAP. The material is updated and reproduced with the permission of the National RTAP.

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## Section 1

# **Leadership: Knowing Your Values and Living Them**

# Lead by Core Principles

This section will help you:

- Identify core values of a community transit system
- Write a powerful mission statement
- Put your mission to work

*“A paradox of management is that too many managers take themselves too seriously while too few take management seriously enough.”*

**James Autry, *Love and Profit, The Art of Caring Leadership***

## Vision and Values: Decide What Matters

In his book, Autry describes what he sees as two types of leaders. The kind who practices management as a trainable skill that, when pursued properly, serves to direct people to perform for the good of the company. This kind of leader sees employees as a means to an end.

A far better leader type – and one that is ideal for community transit – is one who creates a shared vision for his or her organization and challenges people to work toward something greater than their individual goals and needs.

This leader combines vision with core values to create an environment where people can grow personally, feel fulfilled, contribute to a common good and share in the rewards of a job well done. He or she helps their employees see the role that personal and professional values have in the workplace. And when values are compromised, this leader takes quick and decisive action.

Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, and authority on the subject of principle-centered leadership, believes that without the core values of ethics, character and integrity, strong leadership and good business are impossible. “There’s no way to go for a win in our lives if we don’t know what constitutes a win,” he writes.

## Leaders Demonstrate Core Values

Clarifying values is important to the success of any business or organization. But while many organizations post their values, it is how these values are put into everyday practice that really counts. What are the core values important to community transit? The rural transit leaders’ roundtable identified the following:

- **Caring** - Customers are the essence of our business. We work to satisfy our customer needs and anticipate their expectations. We care about our fellow coworkers and ourselves.
- **Empowerment** – Employees are our system’s most important resource. Working as a team enables all of us to succeed. We give people the tools they need to do a quality job.
- **Integrity** – Our daily actions are guided by moral principles that we do not compromise.
- **Empathy** – We listen to each other and anticipate the problems that others might encounter in their jobs.
- **Honesty** – We answer questions straightforwardly and provide honest feedback and evaluation.
- **Fairness** – We set standards and apply them equitably.

- **Flexibility** – We are not rigid about the way things are done. We adapt to changing circumstances and routines.
- **Respect** – We recognize that everyone has a role to play in making our system the best that it can be.
- **Trust** – We trust that each person will perform a job responsibly.
- **Camaraderie** – We are serious about our work, but value a lighthearted, friendly workplace.

Successful leaders live these values in their personal and professional lives, and they reinforce the values throughout their organizations.

Some organizations have periodic “checks” to evaluate what actions and behaviors have been consistent or inconsistent with the common values. This can be done, for example, at a monthly staff meeting. Other organizations implement the popular 360-degree performance review by requiring bosses, peers, and employees to review one another. This is often done anonymously so no one has to worry about retribution.

A *Wall Street Journal* management column provides some good examples of how employee feedback helps managers refocus on core values.

A group of employees told a vice president of marketing that she was “angry a lot,” and it made them uncomfortable. The executive realized that what her staff saw as anger, she saw as “passion.” She learned to be more restrained when making assignments and to avoid vehement outbursts.

Another example was of a boss who learned that his employees were upset that his door was closed most of the time. The employees considered this a lack of respect. He realized that he was so focused on sales to clients that he was neglecting his employees. He stopped closing his office door and posted a written announcement stating that although he might be busy at times, he wanted to be available.

While these examples come from the business world, they are relevant for community transit leaders. A 360-degree review helps everyone, from manager on down, to “walk the talk.” If your employees see you doing something different than what is written or said about core values – they will likely conclude that the values are meaningless.

## Putting It Down on Paper

Besides core values, leaders must ensure their organizations have a clear vision and mission. Many organizations establish these through a collective process and commit them to paper. While there are no rules about this, some choose to distinguish *vision statements* from *mission statements* and/or *value statements*, and they develop and promote all three.

**A vision statement** is how you see your organization at its future best. Or, as Yogi Berra said, “If you don’t know where you are going, you probably aren’t going to get there.”

**A mission statement** identifies why an organization exists. It lets everyone know what the organization expects to do in the near-term to move toward achieving the vision.

**A value statement** describes core beliefs and principles that guide your organization. Again, these core values set the expectations for professional behavior – everyone, at every level, is expected to “walk the talk.”

## Do Your Statements Need Updating?

More often than not, organizations have at least a written mission statement. But the important question is: how long has it been since you gave it a serious look?

Too often an organization’s vision/mission/value statement, which has been handed down over the years, loses relevance and ceases to speak to employees, board members or community advocates. Transit is ever changing and growing. If your agency has moved on – your vision/mission/value statement should reflect that.

## What Makes a good Statement?

Here are some questions to help you decide whether your statement is in need of a tune up.

- **Is it accurate?** Do you still serve the same population? In the same area? Is your agency’s focus the same?
- **Is it too long or technical?** A statement should be concise and free of jargon. (If you can’t recite it without looking at it, then it’s probably too long.)
- **Is it inspirational?** Your statement should make you want to come to work each day.
- **Is it results-oriented?** Or is it a laundry list of activities?
- **Does it have unifying principles?** Can your employees, volunteers and advocates rally around it?

## Writing Tips for Creating Your Statement

Creating or reworking a vision/mission/value statement should be a collaborative process involving leadership and front-line employees. However, give the actual writing assignment to the best writer in your group. Statements produced by committees are rarely inspirational. Keep discussion focused on the substance of the statement rather than its structure and form. Always try to keep in mind these three questions: Who are you? What do you do? For whom?

What makes an effective mission statement? Here are some characteristics:

- No longer than a paragraph
- Easily understood by a sixth grader
- Written in active, rather than passive voice

- Has little to no superlatives (adjectives and adverbs)
- Is direct, powerful, simple and honest

## **Put Your Mission to Work**

One community transit system found that few employees knew the agency had a mission statement; let alone what the statement said.

To put meaning behind your mission statement, it needs to be part of how and why you do business.

- Review the statement with prospective job candidates.
- Refer to it during employee evaluations to reinforce positive feedback or to explain a disciplinary action. In the latter case, employees need to understand that action is being taken because they may have violated a core principle of the agency's mission.
- Make it visible throughout your organization. Put it on walls, on the back of business cards, on your Website and throughout your communications materials.
- Make it part of your ongoing dialogue with employees, customers and community stakeholders.
- Use it to develop your goals and objectives. Don't have a discussion about whether to fund or create a new program without first asking: "Will it help us fulfill our mission?"
- Recognize and reward employees who exemplify the mission.

## EXERCISE – Create a Visioning Team

1. Take an informal poll of your employees.

How many know you have a mission statement? \_\_\_\_\_

How many can tell you what it says? \_\_\_\_\_

How many think that it needs to be rewritten? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Create a visioning team. Select a cross section of employees to participate in a visioning exercise. The exercise can be done in one or two sessions.

Imagine your organization in the future being the best that it can be. What would it be like? The following are some criteria to consider and discuss:

- Core values
- Customer satisfaction
- Best practices and innovations
- Obstacles overcome
- Teamwork
- Recognitions
- Measure of success
- Flexibility to respond to change
- Individual achievements
- Professional growth and development
- Community involvement
- Partners and alliances

After discussion, divide the group into three mini groups. Have one write the vision statement, the next, the mission statement and the third group, the value statement. All statements should be 20 words or less.

Reconvene in an hour or at another scheduled time. Decide whether the statements capture the essence of the visioning discussion. After consensus is reached, give the statements to the best writer in the group for polishing and consistency.

In addition, each team member should be asked to make recommendations for communicating the statements, promoting them, engaging others, measuring progress, and keeping them alive.

**DONE**

# Choose Your Attitude

This section will help you

- Understand the importance of a positive attitude
- Consider how you are perceived by employees

A transit agency leader sets the tone and morale within the workplace. He or she can choose to show stress, irritation, impatience or anxiety. These emotions spread like a virus and can create a toxic workplace environment. Or, he or she can choose a positive, encouraging, enthusiastic attitude.

A sign of effective leadership is the quality of one-on-one relationships with your employees and the attitude you show them every day. In the words of one of our transit panel leaders, "When you walk in that door, you get to decide what kind of "B," you're going to be."

## How Would You React?

Imagine a particularly tough day. Maybe a bus breaks down during the busiest time of day. Then, the printer jams one time too many just as you are trying to get that report to the board. On top of it all, an angry customer calls to tell you that the van that takes her to therapy is late for the third time that month. It's at this point that you need to respond to an employee who has created a problem.

How you deal with difficult situations says a lot about your choice of attitude and the kind of relationships that you have with your employees.

- One range of reactions could be:
  - Utter an angry rebuke.
  - Say something sarcastic.
  - Don't say anything at all, but show irritation through body language such as scowling, clenching teeth or wringing your hands.
  - Tell the person you are very disappointed and leave no room for response.
  - Make the person feel like he or she has let down the agency (guilt-trip).
  - Leave the impression that his or her job is in danger.

Or, another range of reactions:

- Listen to the person's explanation of the problem.
- Be empathetic, without relieving the person of responsibility.
- Decide where the responsibility lies.
- Ask for suggestions on how to prevent the problem from recurring.
- Provide honest and fair assessment.
- Be direct about next steps.
- Evaluate whether the employee needs more training.

“The challenge is to be a light, not a judge; to be a model, not a critic,” writes Stephen Covey in *Principle-Centered Leadership*. His view is that principle-centered people do not overreact to problem situations. Instead, they use such situations as an educational tool to help build employee awareness, responsibility and confidence.

Below are additional suggestions for choosing the right kind of attitude:

- **Be the kind of boss you’d want to work for** – This means someone who listens, who will pitch in and do any job that needs doing, always treats other with respect and who does not play favorites.
- **Always work to build morale** – If employees do a great job, praise them in front of everyone. If they make a mistake, talk to them in private. Schedule social events that everyone can attend. Even doughnuts and coffee provide an opportunity to exchange ideas with each other and build team spirit.
- **Lead, don’t dominate** – Leadership isn’t about saying, “Do this because I say so, and I’m in charge.” Lead by example and give your employees the responsibility and the authority to get things done their way. Empowered workers have more energy and produce better results.

# It's All About Them

This section will help you:

- Understand the need for marketing
- Consider effective marketing tools
- Identify customer needs
- Improve outreach to the media and community stakeholders
- Effective leaders understand that “it’s all about them.”

“Them” refers to your transit system’s employees, customers and community stakeholders. You can’t be a successful manager of people, marketer or advocate for your system if you don’t know your audience and fashion strategies for engaging them.

## Marketing Is About Sales

Because the name of the service is community transit, it is easy to think of it as a community service—something that will be automatically used and supported because it is for the good of the region.

But the fact is community transit is a business like any other. You are competing for market share of ridership. Your competition might be privately owned cars, taxicabs or people giving rides to friends and neighbors. Or, there may be people staying at home because they don’t know enough about your system. In other words, you need to get people to *choose* your system as their transportation provider.

Encouraging them to make that choice in your favor is what successful marketing is all about. Marketing isn’t just some new term for advertising. It’s a combination of communication vehicles and methods aimed at getting your name in front of the public, favorably and repeatedly, so that you will gain more riders, accrue more revenue, and be able to provide even better and more comprehensive service.

Transit system marketing campaigns come in all shapes and sizes, but successful campaigns have these qualities:

- **Clarity:** Message is clear, interesting and understandable.
- **Attention getting:** Campaign and all its materials make an impression.
- **High production quality:** Print ads are attractive; photos, artwork and color are used effectively; broadcast tapes are of professional quality.
- **Measurement of results.** A successful campaign must demonstrate that it has achieved its purpose or goals.

Marketing may not be your first choice of activity, but you must discipline yourself to conduct ongoing, consistent marketing. Positive public perception goes a long way toward helping maintain and build community support.

## Understanding Your Budget

When it comes to how much money can be expended on marketing, all transit systems aren’t created equally. KCATA, community transit system in Kansas City, Missouri, produced an innovative series of television ads featuring a “regular guy” spokesman named Greg who tells people, “I love the bus.” Greg has become a celebrity in the region, even drawing crowds to personal appearances. While the spots have boosted the

system's visibility, they have also been a terrific morale booster for staff, who sees KCATA as a dynamic and fun place to work.

There is one drawback, however. The three 30-second TV spot cost \$20,000 to produce. Now, while that may be a small budget by advertising standards, the fact is that it represents "real" money to many transit systems.

If your budget doesn't accommodate producing TV spots or purchasing air time to run the ads frequently enough to make an impact, then using your marketing dollars for a "mix" of different communication vehicles may be your best and preferred solution.

## **Getting Started**

If you are new to marketing, your first task is to get a sense of how much you can afford to allocate within your operating budget. Marketing is multi-faceted. You should become familiar with the many ways you can create a marketing "mix" to promote your service, including:

- Advertising that uses mass media (newspapers, TV, radio) to get the word out about services
- Direct mail communications to get out detailed information (routes, schedules, etc.) about your service
- Online communications to provide information to individuals and agencies about your service
- Outreach to educate public officials and community leaders, plus ongoing public relations through news articles and features and special events to get your system recognized.

## EXERCISE – Does Your Marketing Plan Measure Up?

Examine your marketing plan.

Is it multi-faceted with a mix of advertising, direct mail, online and public and community relation initiatives?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you budgeting enough in each area to make an impact, or are you spreading your efforts too thin?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you measuring success? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, list your criteria for success:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Now, review the above. Does your plan fulfill the requirements for your organization? List any changes you would make to maximize impact:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**DONE**

## There Are Many Ways to Market

### Newspaper ads

Community newspapers are an excellent medium for advertising local transit. These weekly publications have much more modest advertising rates than daily papers. And because they are community-oriented, often running neighborhood news and notes that large papers don't carry –they are excellent for reaching a "home town" audience.

Depending on your equipment and the capabilities of your office staff, you can create your own ads using desktop computers and publishing software. However, most publications can also create your ad for you (this is called "publication setting" or "pubset"). While having a newspaper create your ad may give you less control over the way it looks –they often offer efficient design and artwork services. You also may consider hiring an advertising or design agency to produce high-quality creative materials to ensure the creation of the most professional image for your organization.

### Tips on writing newspaper ads

- Be sure there's a headline to grab the reader's attention.
- Keep headlines short (no more than 10 words) and "newsy"; for example, **ABC Transit Announces New Smithville Route.**

- Your headline and photo/illustration should tell most of the story. Attention spans are short!
- Use care with photo selection because ease of reproduction is key. Remember, black and white glossy photos work best when converted to newsprint.
- If you are creating the ad and filing it electronically with the paper, be sure you know the file format the newspaper uses and all other technical details.

## **Flyers and Posters**

Flyers and posters are the least expensive advertising medium, other than word-of-mouth. It is possible to create effective flyers and posters using just word processing software and “clip art” that comes with most such software packages.

In addition, you can usually put out flyers for pickup or put up posters at no charge. A stack of flyers in a community center or a senior citizen’s apartment complex is a great, low cost way to spread the news about a new route, a change in schedule, or other specific information. And you can turn the flyers into posters by placing them in many commercial establishments, such as supermarkets, that provide community service bulletin boards.

To encourage use, your posters and flyers should all be the same size – a standard 8½ x 11 piece of paper. Of course, you can photocopy them on a variety of eye-catching colors and paper stocks.

*And always remember to include your system’s logo, phone number and Website site address (if applicable).*

Because this is such an inexpensive medium, you can afford to create posters and flyers to reach specific audiences. For example:

- Design a poster showing the houses of worship on a given route, including a simplified timetable of arrivals and departures on Saturday and Sunday.
- Create a flyer to go in the student union of the college or university in your area, showing routes to apartment complexes catering to students.
- Design a poster showing the points where your community transit service links with other modes of transport (such as Greyhound, Amtrak, etc.)

## EXERCISE – Reach a New Audience

Is there a potential ridership pool you just haven't been able to tap into? Write the headline for a poster and list some key points that you think might "sell" this group on your system.

*Headline*

---

---

*Key points*

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Assign a staff member or team to complete the poster.

**DONE**

## Television and Radio Advertising

As previously discussed, television advertising may be too expensive for many community transit systems, as you not only have to pay for ad production, but you must also factor in the purchase of air time.

However, even systems of modest means may be able to use television as a marketing tool. If you are in a relatively small town with a local cable company, you may be able to get the cable provider to produce your commercial(s) at virtually no charge by simply purchasing air time.

However, even systems of modest means may be able to use television as a marketing tool. If you are in a relatively small town with a local cable company, you may be able to get the cable provider to produce your commercial(s) at virtually no charge by simply purchasing air time. Be aware, though, that much local advertising on cable systems winds up running in time slots with limited viewership. Work with your cable representative to match your ads to times when your target audiences will most likely be watching.

Another effective medium for advertising is radio. Radio can be an affordable option because you can be very selective and pinpoint the audience demographic the station reaches (by age, race, sex, etc.). Also, within radio, you have 60 seconds to see your service, rather than the standard 30 seconds on television.

The radio station you choose will often write and produce your commercial. But if you plan to run spots on more than one station, you should invest a modest amount of money in developing a professionally written and recorded ad to ensure consistency of messages across stations.

## Direct Mail Advertising

This is the medium to use when you need to get directly into people's homes and/or places of business, and for when you want to communicate a complex message, for example, a widespread adjustment in routes and schedules.

The effectiveness of a direct mail piece is only as good as the mailing list with which you are working. A list that is a year or two old is much too out-of-date in communities of any size. If you maintain your own mailing list, be sure to update it regularly as undelivered mail is returned.

If you intend to do regular direct mailings of any size, it will be worth your while to talk to a "mail house," or preferably, to two or three. These businesses specialize in direct mail and they have the most up-to-date lists. A mail house can even assist you in targeting your mailing to specific ZIP codes and providing other services that might stretch your own resources too thin or that you had not considered.

Because direct mail can be costly (just for the postage alone) its use should be restricted to get the word out about major announcements, or doing seasonal updates.

**Example:** Let's say your community has a college football team with a major following. In early August, you could send out a direct mail piece with the team's schedule, along with a schedule of your pre-game departures on significant routes.

This is something fans will hold on to and refer to throughout the season. And if you can get them to and from the games in comfort, it could build your ridership all year long!

## Online Communications

Does your community transit system have a Website site? If not, create one!

The Internet is the revolutionary, "always on" medium that can tell your story, distribute your schedule and reach your audience 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

And the Internet is a vital communications tool for reaching people with disabilities and other key ridership groups.

Nearly every community has companies that can create and host your website (maintain it on the Internet). If you don't want a lot of bells and whistles on your site (such as animation) the cost is now remarkably affordable, given the reach a Website has and the ability you will have to make changes to it quickly.

In just a few Web pages you can:

- Publish your entire current schedule
- Give the projected dates of any upcoming route changes
- Provide complete fare information
- Show how you link with other transportation providers
- Offer a forum for feedback via email
- Make announcements about emergency service changes due to weather conditions

And this is really just the beginning of what your Website can do. If you have already made the investment, you know this. If you haven't set up a site or if it is a static one-page site, this may be the time to take your Website to the next level.

## Don't Neglect Community Outreach and Public Relations

Until now, we have been talking about “paid media” to reach the public. But there are other critical components of marketing that don't have a direct expenditure: Community outreach and public relations.

These are the tools to use when you want to get your system's story out in depth in a variety of forums – or when you want to put a little extra shine on your public image by giving back to the community. These are a few examples:

- Offer your services as a luncheon speaker to a local service club, like Kiwanis or Lions. Don't use your speech just to sell; talk about how public transit fits into the entire transportation pattern of your town, for example.
- Try to get bookings on local talk radio stations that have call-in segments. Try to avoid programs that live on controversy, however.
- Provide services free of charge to populations that need them. For example, shuttle kids to and from summer recreational programs.

Look at the three community outreach ideas above. You can leverage their effectiveness if you get the story out about them. A brief press release to local papers, summarizing the key points of the talk you gave at the Lion's Club, or talking about the free shuttles you are offering this summer to children, can help build your system's image in the public mind.

In fact, whenever you have a piece of news to share (you have acquired two new buses, hired five new drivers, etc.) you should send out a brief release to local community papers, who are usually more than willing to run such items.

### Tips on Press Release Guidelines

- Always put the most important information in the first paragraph. Remember that the first sentence is your attention grabber – it should give details in an intriguing manner, to encourage further reading. A simple guide to writing your lead paragraph is to answer five key questions: Who, What, When, Where, and Why. For example:

*ABC Community Transit today announced it has acquired two new 30-passenger mini-buses to serve its growing Smithville ridership.*

- Getting this key information up front means the newspaper editor can (1) see what the story is at a glance and (2) drop all the subsequent information, if need be, and still get the key elements in the article.

The paragraphs following your first sentence should build upon the information (for example, details about Smithville services, the make of the buses and who they are being purchased from) in the order of most important to least important.

- Always put the date on your press releases so editors will know they are current.
- Always include a contact name and phone number in case the publication wants to call you to follow up.
- Call the publication before you send your release to find out whose attention it should be directed to and whether the paper prefers to receive a fax or an email.
- Send out releases only when you have legitimate news. Don't try to use them as free advertising.

## Section 2

# **Hiring, Training, and Keeping the Best People**

# Recruit Flexible and Caring People

This section will help you:

- Recruit and hire the right people for your system
- Write effective help-wanted ads
- Improve your interviewing techniques

Community transit is the ultimate “people-oriented” business. Your passengers depend on your system for one of their most basic needs: Mobility. Every day, these people trust you and your staff to get them where they need to be, on time and safely.

This means that finding the right people to serve your passengers is a critical job for you. And to find the right people, you have to know what to look for.

Today’s workplaces need flexible people who can do more than one task and who can easily adapt to changes in their jobs or routines, like adapting to a new schedule or equipment, or accepting a new route.

You want people who work well as a team and who possess character traits that match the values of our organization such as honesty, integrity and trustworthiness. Most of all, you want to find people who care.

You can teach a person to drive. You can’t teach caring.

## Who is right for the job?

As an example, let’s consider the job of bus operators. If you approach this in a cut-and-dried manner, you would probably say that being an experienced, licensed bus driver is by far the most important qualification.

But if you put the primary, functional skill at the top of your list, you might be missing out on an entire pool of talent that’s particularly suited to your operation, such as:

- People experienced in senior care/services
- People who have worked with persons with disabilities
- Retail sales clerks who are comfortable dealing with the public

These are people whose backgrounds make them well-suited to community transit. And, depending on individual interests, they may be eager to learn a new skill such as bus driving.

Would you rather hire a person with enthusiasm and caring qualities or a veteran transit driver whose only goal is to stick to his schedule?

## **Your Primary Recruitment Tool: Want Ads**

Want ads placed in local and regional newspapers are the most commonly used tools for recruiting community transit personnel.

Depending on the size of your service area, you may consider using local weekly papers for the bulk of your advertising, because:

- Space in community weekly papers is less expensive than in major daily papers
- There is a smaller volume of want ads for prospects to wade through
- You will be reaching people who live in your community and would probably like to work in it, too

### **Tip: For maximum results, list under multiple headings**

Any business has a tendency to be job-specific when listing ads in help-wanted pages. But community transit isn't just any business! Remember, you are looking for applicants who are people-oriented.

So, yes, you should list jobs under "Driver" or "Dispatcher." But you should also consider listing under headings such as:

- Care giving
- Customer service
- Social services

Again, you want to draw from as wide a talent pool as possible. And if you are running ads in community newspapers, the lower ad space cost will give you greater flexibility to run under multiple headings.

### **Tips: Don't write ads that describe. Write ads that sell!**

A help-wanted ad is a marketing tool – not just a listing of requirements and tasks. You want to make potential candidates want to learn more about your transit system. So sell!

For example, Tri-Met in Portland was looking for bus drivers. So the system's ad had a small headline reading: "Tri-Met is hiring bus drivers." But a larger headline immediately said: "Come for the benefits; stay for the opportunities."

In just eight words, Tri-Met communicated that it was a great place to work now – and a place that gives people the opportunity for future advancement.

### **Tip: The "don'ts" of writing a transit want ad**

- Don't cram too many words into too small a space.
- Avoid transit-industry language the general public might not understand.
- Stay away from boring headlines such as "drivers wanted."
- Resist using personality trait descriptions such as "likes working with people." In interviews, candidates will just describe what you say in the ad.
- Rather than personality traits, use experience as a want ad screening tool. Say, "Experience working with senior citizens or persons with disabilities is desired."

## Creative Recruitment: Don't Stop with Want Ads

Think back to when you were looking for your first or second job. You didn't just read the newspaper. You talked to friends. Maybe you had your parents talk to their friends. You looked at signs in store windows. Perhaps you even just walked into companies and asked if they were hiring.

Well, now that *you* are doing the hiring, you have to take that same kind of active approach – you have to spread your net as far as possible to catch the right employees. So consider doing the following:

- **Tell everyone you know you are looking for employees.** Talk with friends and neighbors, business colleagues and vendors. If a nearby transit system is reducing services, contact their personnel office.
- **Use your own resources.** Post job announcements and application forms on your Website. Use your vehicles as rolling billboards by putting on decals advertising a position and giving a phone number.
- **Set up an employee referral program.** Offer cash incentives or gift certificates for referrals that result in a hire. (They don't have to be lavish – maybe a \$25 restaurant certificate.) You will likely get a better caliber of applicant, because your current employees will be careful about whom they refer – it's almost like prescreening.
- **Staff a table at a job fair.** This is an inexpensive way to reach motivated people who are actively in the job market. Added benefit: You get to advertise your system and network with customers or potential customers.
- **Post notices at community sites.** A flyer at a recreation center could attract young people, retirees, or volunteers.

## Take Time to Find the Right Candidate

Once you have succeeded in recruiting a good crop of candidates, how do you pick out the best from the bunch?

A good job description is important – so are good interviewing techniques. Also be sure that references and backgrounds check out, especially for drivers who you depend upon to provide safe passage.

### Start with a Good Job Description

A good job description not only helps attract the right people, but it can also discourage the wrong people from applying. People who are wrong for the job may have great driving skills, but less than great people skills. Or, they may be people who cannot pass driving or criminal background checks or drug or alcohol screenings.

Job descriptions tell potential employees what will be expected of them and gives a supervisor a means of later evaluating the person. Written descriptions also come in handy if employees later raise issues or complaints about their duties or responsibilities – or take legal action.

What makes a good description? The “meat” of the job description is identifying all the tasks and the duties a person needs to perform in order to do the job effectively.

### Tip: Avoid words that can be interpreted in more than one way

Take the word, “handle,” for example. A customer representative may report that he or she *handled* a customer complaint. But it's the outcome that matters. In the end, was the customer satisfied? Try describing

the outcome of the work, rather than the method for accomplishing it. Instead of “writes down pick up times;” you might state, “accurately records pick up times.”

A complete job description lists the following:

- Title
- Summary of the position
- Duties and responsibilities
- Qualifications
- Level of supervision required

Some transit systems make job descriptions part of a “recruitment package” that they post on their Websites. The package includes information about the selection process; working conditions; pay and benefits; pre- and post-employment requirements, such as ceremonial checks and drug and alcohol testing. It’s also a good place to include the transit system’s vision and values statements.

This strategy helps attract applicants who may never have considered a career in community transit but are intrigued by what they see, especially the customer service nature of the job.

## **Make the Most of the Interview**

One of the most important decisions a manager can make is deciding on what kind of people to bring into the organization. So don’t rush through the interview process.

Here is more practical advice:

- **Work from a structure.** Asking the same questions in the same way ensures uniformity and consistency across all interviews. This makes it easier to compare candidates and makes for a more professional interview. It also can help avoid the risk of violating anti-discrimination laws.
- **Do more listening than talking.** Too many interviewers make the mistake of selling the candidate on the job instead of listening to answers and then probing further if needed. Red flags include narrow answers to open-ended questions, “we” responses and inexact language. Ask for specific examples of what applicants have done in the past.
- **Use the funnel technique.** Start with general warm-up questions, such as, “why don’t you walk me through your background?” Then get more specific, going through the job description and asking questions targeted at the skills and experience you need.

And remember that extracurricular activities are an area protected under federal Equal Employment Opportunity rules. EEO guidelines also apply to all settings – not just an office setting. Be mindful of “friendly” conversation that you might have while showing an applicant around your facility.

## **A Word about ADA**

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) states that employers should make reasonable accommodations for anyone needing them for any part of the job application process. But don’t view ADA as an affirmative action law. It simply says that an individual with a disability should have an equal opportunity to obtain a job for which he or she is qualified.

Many applicants do not require any special accommodation. However, when one is needed, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) suggests this approach for determining what accommodations are reasonable:

- Analyze the job to determine the essential functions
- Determine, with the applicant's input, how the disability affects the essential function
- Identify ways to overcome the limitations
- Determine the feasibility of the proposed accommodation, with the applicant's preference
- Select the appropriate accommodation

Consult with an ADA official if you are unsure about the meaning of reasonable accommodations. Additional information on workplace accommodations is also available at the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy Web site ([www.dol.gov/odep](http://www.dol.gov/odep)) and at [www.disabilityinfo.gov](http://www.disabilityinfo.gov).

## Reference and Background

The candidate has both people and technical skills and the flexibility you are looking for. He or she is hired, right? Not yet.

There is still the need to do reference and background checks. Plenty of seemingly good candidates have come up short when employers have made the effort to do thorough checks.

**Dates:** Past employers should be able to verify dates of employment and reasons for leaving. They are cautious about giving out more information than that because of potential legal liability. But you can solve that problem by getting the candidate's written permission to talk with references about job history.

**Attendance:** You might consider asking about attendance and whether the person would be eligible for rehire. Other lines of inquiry might include: quality and quantity of work; cooperation, initiative and attitude; the amount of supervision required and whether the applicant presented a neat appearance.

**Background Checks:** In addition, for vehicle operator candidates, driving and criminal background checks should be done. Make sure the criteria for these checks are clear. The criteria should state which offenses are relevant; what offense will disqualify an applicant; what other factors will be considered (such as the time when infractions occurred); how the information will be protected; and how the rights of the applicant will be preserved. Remember that accusations are not convictions – people are innocent until proven guilty.

Another consideration is applicability. Does the person need a "clean" record to fulfill the job requirements? Is the infraction relevant to performance of job duties? It can be illegal to deny employment if the conviction is not found relevant to job performance. Conversely, some crimes, such as child molestation, prohibit eligibility for certain jobs. Also, you may choose to make allowances for offenses committed at a young age, society factors, severity of the crimes, and evidence of rehabilitation.

**Waiver:** Have each applicant sign an agreement and waiver statement giving your system the authority to check background and credentials. Once collected, review the information with the applicant to ensure accuracy and to provide the person an opportunity to resolve any discrepancies in the reports.

Great, the person checks out. Now, it is time to think about the tools that he or she needs to do the best possible job.

# Give People the Tools They Need

This section will help you:

- Involve your employees in training and development
- Understand the importance of training
- Identify necessary training programs

Providing employees with on-the-job training and job and career development opportunities pays dividends for both the organization and employees. A well-trained employee will do a better job and present a better image to the public. But training also helps build confidence, which leads employees to taking more control and responsibility in their daily jobs.

## Training and Development: A Two-Way Street

Involving employees in the training and development process makes for an even better employment experience. Here are some ideas:

- When interviewing, ask employees what types of skills they would like to learn or better develop. Help them achieve these goals.
- Ask your employees to make lists of opportunities for training and development, such as taking on new assignments, developing new skills or participating in teams. Then meet with them to discuss what is possible.
- When possible, let employees select and attend a training course of their choice.
- Before employees attend a course, take time to meet with them to discuss what you hope they will learn from it. After they return, meet again to hear what they learned and how they will apply their new knowledge to the workplace.
- After training, have employees share what they learned with coworkers at an in-house workshop.
- For employees who want to advance in the organization, help them develop a career plan. Help identify specific skills, team assignments and job rotations that will position the employee to achieve his or her professional goals. Use mentors to help employees develop these plans.

The above tips all have one thing in common: *communication*. Involving employees in training decisions and expressing your interest in their continuous growth not only boosts morale but gives employees incentive to stay with the organization.

## What Vehicle Operators Need to Know

With a large number of new hires coming from non-transit backgrounds, vehicle training is a significant responsibility for community transit. In addition to the organizational orientation required for all new hires, transit operators must frequently be taught driving and safety skills from the ground up. If your system uses part-time staff and volunteers, it is important that they receive the same training as permanent transit staff.

Traditional classroom and field training for bus and van drivers focuses on these areas:

- Safe driving practices.
- Operational functions, such as radio communications, schedule adherence, handling of fares, pre-trip inspections, map reading, securements, filing incidence reports.

- ADA transportation issues and sensitivity awareness.
- Passenger assistance and dealing with difficult passengers.
- Emergency procedures, such as evacuation, rescues, fire safety.
- Medical basics – first aid, CPR, blood-borne pathogens.
- Appropriate dress and health habits.

Today, training often includes a focus on:

- Stress management.
- Workplace violence: prevention, response and recovery.
- Security awareness.
- Individualized training through technology.
- Sexual Harassment.

### **Ongoing Professional Development**

To meet the challenges of growth, technology and an increasingly diverse ridership, community transit systems must depend more and more on the collective brainpower and skill sets of all employees.

While it may be tempting to cut training activities in some circumstances, training and development is essential to serving the needs of your customers and your communities.

Community trainers recommend that individuals be trained in these core areas:

- Organizational skills – making internal programs and processes more effective and efficient.
- Technical skills – focusing on proficiency and safety.
- People skills – learning how to assist and satisfy customers.
- Community image skills – focusing on public relations and advocacy
- Crisis and security management skills – learning to prepare for and handle emergencies.
- Teamwork skills – learning to work efficiently as a team.

Many systems cross-train employees in many different tasks and areas to make sure there is a staff member available who knows how to perform every task should the need arise. When employees know how to do the same task, they start looking over each other's shoulders and comparing each other's actions to see what gets the best results.

For example, maintenance workers have learned procurement procedures in addition to their regular tasks. Bus drivers and dispatchers have each learned how to perform both jobs. Transit managers have found that cross-training not only reduces employee turnover, but it also provides employees with a greater possibility for advancement.

### **Training Resources**

You will find that there are many sources for community transit training for all levels of employees. NDOR has partnered with the Nebraska Safety Center to provide passenger assistance and sensitivity training for transit employees.

Transit managers may be interested in Senior Leadership Training offered by the National Transit Institute at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. For a list of upcoming courses, visit [NDOR's Public Transportation website](#). Other training events are sponsored by the [Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers \(NATP\)](#) and are listed on their website. To request specialized training, contact Kari Ruse, NDOR Transit Liaison Manager at 402-479-4694 or email <mailto:kari.ruse@nebraska.gov>.

National RTAP and various state RTAPs offer a wide range of training packages and information for all sizes and shapes of community transit systems. To see what is available, visit [www.nationalrtap.org](http://www.nationalrtap.org).

CTAA offers professional certification programs for Community Transit Manager, Community Transit Supervisor, Passenger Service and Safety and others.

Some transit agencies also have partnered with welfare-to-work programs and Job Corps to enroll participants in mechanics' apprenticeship programs. Other transit systems have started their own "corporate colleges" by combining on-site community colleges and university college-transfer courses.

# Motivate, Evaluate, Reward

This section will help you:

- Appreciate the need for recognition and rewards programs
- Create effective incentive programs
- Understand the importance of employee evaluations

When was the last time you, the manager, met your drivers in the parking lot and said, "Thank you"? Those two words don't cost anything to give, but it is amazing how much value they carry. That was the consensus of the transit leader discussion group. A simple thank-you or acknowledgement can keep employees excited about their work.

Frontline employees, especially your drivers, are your most important assets. You expect them to protect a positive, helpful and energetic attitude of all the time...or else you risk losing public support.

Unfortunately, in many organizations good performance is taken for granted, while poor performance is always recognized. Studies have shown that job recognition goes far toward motivating employees to keep up the good work. Some managers think about retention after a good employee resigns. *If you have worked hard to hire a good employee, then you must continue the work to retain him or her.*

## Show Employees They are Appreciated

In community transit, you are not likely to offer large bonuses or stock options. But with some creativity, you can show your employees that you truly care. Here are some ideas:

- **“Thank you” or “Good job” notes** - When someone is especially helpful or handled something especially well, write them a personal note.
- **Annual celebrations** – Once a year have a formal celebration that recognizes the great work everybody has done and provides a forum to publicly spotlight people who went above and beyond the call of duty to satisfy a customer or assist a team member.
- **Commendation bulletin boards** – Have a central place in the agency for posting awards, achievements, job promotions and customer appreciation letters.
- **Symbols of quality performance** – Award medallions, patches, pins or other visible signs of a job well done.

## Effective Incentive Programs

Another way of showing appreciation and recognition is through incentive programs. Transit systems typically give employees small cash awards, gift certificates to a movie or restaurant or household gifts for reaching a certain performance level. One transit system awards employees' perfect attendance or a year of accident-free driving with a \$50 bond, a personal leave day and specific recognition at a banquet.

Virginia Regional Transit offers a year-end bonus program tied to accumulation of points and length of time with the organization. Everyone starts with 65 points. The points are added for a number of factors including perfect attendance, safety record or completion of a training course. Conversely, points are subtracted for a moving violation and other infractions. The points are then converted to a percentage of salary.

Consider offering your drivers the opportunity to participate in a "safety sweepstakes." Drivers with no preventable accidents each month receive a safety award and a card with some safety questions. Cards from those drivers who answer correctly are entered into a monthly drawing. All cards are entered into an annual drawing in which the winner receives paid leave time.

Still other systems tie a rewards program to team accomplishments. This has the advantage of encouraging teamwork and initiative at the same time.

Employees tend to like incentive programs as long as they perceive them to be fair and uniformly applied and as long as they don't substitute for deserved raises or promotions. If incentives are tied to performance criteria that are unclear or perceived as arbitrary or if programs are limited to only certain levels of employees, they don't achieve productive results.

## **Rodeo Recognition**

Even though drivers play such a pivotal role in community transit, there are relatively few opportunities for them to be recognized for accomplishments beyond their own transit system.

One exception is the National Community Transportation Rodeo that tests the skills of operators in various categories such as driving, wheelchair loading and properly securing passengers and pre-trip inspections. Plus, a written test is administered. Awards are presented at a dinner banquet to the top five contestants in van and small bus divisions. A Driver of the Year Award is also presented to the division winner who wins by the largest margin.

Another way to reward drivers is through a Master Drivers Program. One community transit system recognizes operators who achieve high levels of safety and professionalism by offering a Master Driver designation. Operators who meet certain criteria and pass a written test receive a plaque, a Master Driver jacket and shirts with a Master Driver patch. The designation is for one year and drivers may reapply if they continue to meet the program requirements.

## **Other Ways to Show Value**

In addition to recognition activities and rewards, there are other ways to deliver the message that your employees are valued members of the organization. Keep in mind that what might work for one system, might not work as well for another. Listen to your organization's grapevine and be ready to suggest changes and alternatives when they are needed. Some ideas that may work for you follow:

- **Greater Flexibility in the Use of Time Off.** Allow drivers to trade days off with other operators who have similar work shifts and allow employees to take annual leave in daily rather than weekly increments (although you may decide to cap the number of days in order to limit three-day weekends.) Offer employees personal days off so they don't have to take sick leave for doctor or dentist annual checkups.
- **Focus on Wellness.** Create in-house workout rooms, provide after-hours exercise classes or offer courses on such topics as weight reduction, smoking cessation, and nutritional education and stress management. Focus on a particular health concern by conducting a heart or cancer awareness day or by providing flu shots.
- **Foster Communications.** Have programs for new hires in which their experienced counterparts guide, tour and advise them during the first weeks on the job. Hold monthly meetings with work teams at all levels to compare experiences and to solicit ideas for changes and improvements.

Seeking and implementing employee suggestions gives individuals a sense of ownership.

## **A Final Suggestion: Make It Fun**

One last suggestion is to encourage some fun and spontaneity in the workplace. One of the best ways to handle stress is humor and laughter, as long as it is done appropriately. Enjoy your job and give others a chance to enjoy their jobs, too, so they will look forward to coming to work.

## **Employees Need Feedback and Evaluation**

Another factor that influences employee retention is the agency's evaluation process.

The annual or semi-annual review is your best time to look back and tell employees what they are doing right or what they need to improve upon. Quarterly reviews give you or your supervisors the opportunity to identify potential problems and suggest corrective actions.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you do employee evaluations:

- **Ensure consistency** – Have written policies and procedures against which performance is measured. Performance appraisals that are consistently applied throughout the transit system can help managers and team leaders pinpoint both the strengths and weaknesses of employees. Programs can then be designed to correct the latter. Also, this is a way to help protect against allegations that employees with similar performance levels were given unequal rewards or disciplinary action.
- **Obtain employee feedback** – prepare a written evaluation, which the employee then signs. Encourage an employee to add written comments. This keeps the evaluation from being one-sided and helps management understand how employees perceive their abilities.
- **Reinforce the agency's vision and values** – Review with an employee the mission, value and goals of the organization. For example, a system that values customer service can reflect this by evaluating employees on their sensitivity and responsiveness to passenger needs.
- **Recognizing valued performers** – Use the evaluation to let top performers know of their value to the organization. Even with the best of intentions, managers don't always recognize quality work or performance at the time that it happens.

## **Communicate About Problems and How to Solve Them**

The annual review is *not* the first time to tell an employee that his or her performance falls below satisfactory. Waiting too long to address a deficiency in a worker's behavior or performance is a common mistake made by managers and supervisors. Morale suffers when it seems that some employees get off easy. It's just damaging, however, to give an employee a glowing report and then to discipline him or her for a single infraction.

Even with the best recruiting, hiring, training and motivational efforts, a manager is likely to encounter some problem employees.

While no one enjoys giving an employee a poor report, it is unfair to the worker and to other employees to ignore substandard performance. Establish clear personnel policies and procedures and follow them if it becomes necessary to discipline an employee. You may want to consider having an employment attorney review your disciplinary policies to ensure that both the employees' and the agency's legal rights are respected.

Administer discipline fairly, uniformly and consistently. Developing and distributing an employee policies and procedures handbook is one way to make employees aware of causes for disciplinary action and actions that will be taken if performance or work products do not sufficiently improve.

An effective discipline system utilizes rules and regulations, a system of progressive penalties for infractions and an appeals process. Progressive penalties typically include:

- Verbal warning
- Written reprimand
- Short-term suspension
- Long-term suspension
- Demotion
- Dismissal

If you have followed the process and dismissal is in order, then follow the advice of Angela Scalpello, “Hire slowly. Fire quickly.” It’s a playoff, she says, of the common wisdom of “Marry slowly. Divorce quickly.” There is nothing to be gained by dragging out the inevitable.

### **EXERCISE – Evaluate Your Evaluations**

Think back to the last time you gave an employee a poor evaluation.

*What was the outcome?*

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*Do you have a policy for addressing problem performance as it occurs?*

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Evaluate your policies and procedures policies for evaluations (annual, semiannual or quarterly) reviews and disciplinary action.

*Are these written?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Are they clear and understandable?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Do they need to be in a second language?* \_\_\_\_\_

**DONE**

Section 3

**Effective and Efficient  
Operations**

# Focus on What Counts

This section will help you:

- Stay focused on your primary mission
- Trust in your team
- Implement good systems and procedures

Leading a community transit system is a challenging job. Transit Managers can meet this challenge with a "can-do" spirit and a commitment to providing the best possible service to a diverse and growing customer base.

## It Starts with Commitment

Revisit your mission/vision statement with employees and the board of directors. In the hustle and bustle of everyday community transit, it's not always easy to stay focused on your priorities. With each day comes a new set of questions. What needs to be repaired the most? What forms have to go to the NDOR today? How do I get that extra person that I need? Also there is the added pressure of the rules and regulations that come with government funding. But even while addressing immediate needs, an effective leader must stay focused on what counts - his/her passengers.

### EXERCISE – Keep a Time Diary

Keep track of your daily activities as a transit manager over the course of a week. Write them down on a notepad that will become your "time diary." At the end of the week, ask yourself these questions:

*How much of your time was spent on the mission of the organization, focusing on your customers?*

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*How much time was spent on administrative activities?*

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If a majority of the time was spent on the latter category, think of ways to delegate in order to create a balance so that you have time to focus on THEM (customers, employees, gaining advocates).

**DONE**

## Assign Leaders to Functional Areas

Facilitate ownership and buy-in by placing responsibility with team leaders and trusting them to initiate a new task or solve a problem.

As organizations grow and the numbers of employees increase, day-to-day job responsibilities can cause people to lose sight of the main goal. By encouraging and facilitating teamwork, successful managers help their staff remain on course. Successful leaders also recognize that different problems require different approaches, and they tailor their teams to the particular situation. There is no cookie-cutter special team that can address every issue an organization faces. There must be flexibility and creativity to match the team to the problem.

## Importance of Systems and Procedures

Ensure that compliance becomes routine for all staff. Without formal processes and procedures, an organization runs the risk of reinventing the wheel each time a new program is started or a person hired. On the other hand, rigid systems can stifle creativity and innovation.

To balance operational consistency with creativity, some businesses practice a quality control system patterned after the U.S. Army's After Action Reviews (AARs), which might also serve as a model for transit operations. The process may be formal or informal and may involve large or small groups, but discussion always revolves around the same four questions:

- What did we set out to do?
- What actually happened?
- Why did it happen?
- What are we going to do next time?

According to Army guidelines, roughly 25 percent of the time should be devoted to the first two questions, 25 percent to the third, and 50 percent to the fourth.

Transit leaders could adapt this review process to their systems by creating project review teams to focus on issues from the customer's perspective. When key milestones in a program are reached, the team meets to discuss both successes and mistakes and to look ahead. An advantage of this process is that it encourages employees to keep their focus on the things that count to satisfy their customers.

Contrast this approach with the kind of leader who has the attitude of "I don't know what I want, so I can't tell you exactly what to do. But I'll recognize it when I see it. So just go out there, do good things."

## Policies and Procedures: Write Them Down

Another means for keeping focus is an operations manual. This is a comprehensive guide for how your transit system functions. It should be written so that a new manager understands from day one the day-to-day procedures for operating your system and so that staff can do the work of others, if necessary. Having written policy and procedures leaves no room for confusion or misinterpretation on the part of either manager or employee.

Operation manuals typically include the following information:

- How-to procedures, e.g., how to perform a trip inspection or how to create a customized mailing list.
- Location of items, e.g., emergency kit.
- Contacts, e.g., board members, funders, vendors, insurance company.
- Business-related policies, procedures and regulations, e.g., collection of fares.

Policies and procedures of each department or functional area should be listed, along with job description. It is also wise to include emergency procedures and a disaster recovery plan in the event of a flood, fire or other disaster.

Don't reinvent the wheel. Your phone system, for example, probably comes with a user's guide. Reference the guide in the manual and note where the phone guides are available.

**Involve Employees:** It's a good idea to get your employees involved in the process of writing or updating an operations manual. If they understand that the manual is a tool for efficient operations, they will be more

willing to provide input. While there may be a single writer, an operations manual must be an organization-wide effort with input received from all departments and areas.

**Do a Test Run:** Once your updated operations manual is complete, it's time for a test run. Have employees in one department follow the procedures for a different area to see if they can complete the tasks with relative ease. Ask them for their feedback to ensure it is the most useful manual possible.

### **EXERCISE – Optimize your Operations Manual**

Review your current operations manual (if there is one) to make sure it is as complete and up-to-date as possible. If it is out-of-date or doesn't exist, answering the questions below will help you create a plan of action to update or create the manual.

Staffing – who will manage?

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Is there a model to follow?

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How will information be collected?

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What is a realistic timeline to have the manual completed?

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What is the review process?

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How will you collect employee feedback?

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Are there other considerations?

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**DONE**

# Recognize and Adapt to Change

This section will help you:

- Focus on the need to manage by objectives
- Be flexible to meet changing circumstances

Leading an operation involves adapting service models to meet changing needs. Community transit can be affected by political, fiscal or regulatory changes and other outside factors. The key is to recognize changes and move with them. Otherwise you and your system will be left behind.

## Five Benchmarks to Turn Vision into Reality

### Service Delivery

- Ascertain and provide the best resource utilization possible to meet need.
- Measure, monitor and adjust the service model as required.
- Provide for capital development that will meet the long-term rolling capital needs of the consumers we serve.
- Plan, acquire and implement data handling systems that will provide customer service at the highest level possible.
- Advocate for funding to increase the volume and availability of buses for the citizens we serve.
- Recognize and begin planning for existing urban/rural funding conflicts.

### Marketing

- Develop advertising strategies that utilize mass communication to inform target audiences of our services.
- Develop strategies that assist current and future passengers in accessing our services (with the intent to increase hourly passenger usage).
- Use direct mail to deliver more complex and detailed information to inform the public how to access service.
- Educate stakeholders such as politicians, community leaders, and human service managers as to the availability of our service.
- Upgrade our public image to be recognized as the single source for transit services in the areas we serve.
- Acquire funding to support a wide marketing strategy that is ongoing and will keep the public informed.
- Utilize the Internet and communication technology to provide information to people, agencies, and locations we serve.

## **Human Resources**

- Establish a system for recruiting the most desirable workforce applicants to meet the needs of the organization.
- Develop systems to encourage longevity through innovative benefits and retention programs.
- Adapt personnel practice to the diverse regional interests.
- Develop, implement, monitor and improve training programs that foster excellence in performance.
- Comply with and remain current on ongoing rules and regulations governing employment.
- Maintain staffing levels that provide opportunity for advancement and growth for full and part-time staff.

## **Fiscal Resources**

- Develop, modify and maximize operating and capital financial resources that will meet the service delivery needs of the organization.
- Comply with and remain current on financial reporting and auditing requirements of the community and the industry.
- Establish reporting and tracking systems that adequately inform the board of directors, so that the best possible decisions concerning resources can be made.
- Provide for capital development that will meet the long-term facility and rolling capital needs of the association.
- Create public-private partnerships that will diversify and strengthen the financial base of the organization.
- Present realistic fiscal plans for each financial cycle.

## **Capital Resources**

### ***Rolling Stock***

- Establish a system for monitoring the condition of the fleet to determine the most efficient allocation of those resources.
- See funding to replace, as scheduled, the existing fleet and expand to meet changing needs.
- Measure maintenance resource allocations, and develop plans that will assess the cost/benefit of certain major repairs.
- Create a fleet of vehicles that will meet ADA requirements and be diverse enough to match the most efficient vehicle to the job required.

### ***Real Property***

- Acquire or develop a regional facility that will serve the administrative and maintenance needs of the association.
- Provide administrative offices wherever the service model requires in order to support services.
- Become a community resource for vehicle repairs, maintenance and training.

## **Conduct A Yearly Check Up:**

Annually review goals and objectives to evaluate progress and made adjustments. Remember that not all goals are achievable in the way they were first conceived. Be flexible enough to adjust to changing circumstances and/or needs.

Here are some examples of how you can put your plan into action:

- Both direct mail and TV advertising can be used to keep your services visible to the public and its funders. It is promoted as meeting a wide variety of transportation needs.
- Act as an advocate for your system by joining and becoming active in various community organizations. Network with community leaders and officials. Avoid duplication of services by partnering with other agencies with a similar mission or serving the same population.

# Utilize Your Peer Network

This section will help you:

- Appreciate that you are not alone
- Identify ways to network with your peers

A final theme in this discussion about leadership is the recognition that you do not have to know everything about community transit or do everything yourself in order to be effective.

## Be Open to Learning

New managers are coming into community transit all the time. One of the greatest resources available is the existing network of managers who make it a practice to communicate with one another to share information, problems and successes.

Management experts advise enterprising professionals to keep abreast of new and prevailing trends and technologies in their industries. This is the source of discovering new opportunities. Successful managers are always looking for new markets, new applications or a new twist on an old concept. This scanning behavior is more than just a past time; it is part of a habit. The other part of the habit is to respond to the opportunity when you find it.

## Take Advantage of Opportunities

New managers should make it a point to attend national, regional and state conferences or training and development sessions in order to get to know their peers. These meetings often have best practices sessions where transit Managers from large and small operations share experiences and discuss what has worked and has not worked for them.

For example, at a quarterly meeting of a state transportation organization, a wide range of topics were discussed: Regional transportation coordination; developing criteria for risk management; reducing work's compensation claims and starting information pools.

Community transit agencies and their managers are profiled in magazines and newsletters available online through National RTAP, and state RTAPs. A particularly good source of online information is [www.kutc.ku.edu](http://www.kutc.ku.edu). You can find the current issue of *Kansas Trans Reporter*, a National RTAP award winner, as well as back issues. It has well-researched and timely articles dealing with issue and people management, marketing and customer service. It reads more like a management brief than a newsletter.

**Tip: Don't hesitate to contact an individual if you find they have solved a problem you are currently facing or are facing an issue similar to yours.**

## Additional Resources

*Some centralized sources:*

Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers at <http://www.neatp.org/index.html?page=home>

NDOR Public Transportation at <http://www.transportation.nebraska.gov/rpt/pub-transp.htm>

CTAA's National Transit Resource Center Information Station at [www.ctaa.org/ntrc](http://www.ctaa.org/ntrc) or 1-800-627-8279

National RTAP Training Resources Catalog at [www.nationalrtap.org](http://www.nationalrtap.org) or phone National RTAP  
202-408-9541

Federal Transit Administration (FTA National Transit Library) at [www.fta.dot.gov/library](http://www.fta.dot.gov/library)