ASK THE DIRECTOR

Q: Each year we have difficulty hiring seasonal CDL drivers for winter maintenance. What is the department doing to help the districts find good, qualified candidates?

A: Having a professional and reliable workforce is the foundation of any great business. With a complex organization such as ODOT, we have a unique set of job requirements that sometimes are difficult to fill, such as seasonal CDL drivers. So why is it challenging to hire seasonals?

First, the department is competing with several public and private businesses that need truck drivers, from local governments to trucking companies and specific regional demands such as the oil and gas industry in eastern Ohio. Most of these trucking jobs pay more than ODOT, sometimes double, and provide benefits. Seasonal drivers receive no benefits. As well, first-time CDL drivers are looking for an immediate return on their investment, and are more likely to take a job with a trucking company than starting out as a seasonal driver with ODOT and working their way into a permanent position. However, during my “Chats with the Director,” those who started out as seasonal drivers and are now full-time employees are very happy. They have better flexibility, competitive pay and very good benefits. Now let’s talk about what the department is doing to find well-qualified CDL drivers. Just in time for snow and ice season, the department has developed a three-prong coordinated effort to promote seasonal CDL positions. Several divisions and offices collaborated on this effort, including HR, Employee Development, Facilities and Equipment Management, Communications, Operations, ODI and district personnel. This fall, you’ll be seeing our trucks with a new sticker that reads, “CDL Drivers, We’re Hiring” along with the department’s website. The website is outfitted with a banner that sends prospective candidates to all of the seasonal job postings organized by region. Second, districts have been hosting CDL specific job fairs and working with local resource agencies and community action organizations to educate them about CDL positions available within the department. Finally, we are also running online ads targeted at specific demographics as well as utilizing social media to promote the campaign.

Although it’s too early to tell, we are confident this campaign will not only get CDL drivers to consider a job at ODOT, but provide the department with professional, reliable and highly-qualified candidates.

District 4 Real Estate Department Helps Habitat for Humanity

Brent Kovacs, District 4

Habitat for Humanity is an international, nonprofit organization devoted to building “simple, decent, and affordable” housing. Volunteers build the houses on purchased or donated land. Having access to recycled house construction materials helps keep costs down.

A partnership between Habitat for Humanity and District 4’s Real Estate office is helping provide these donated construction materials. ODOT is conducting a project on the Interstate 76/Wooster Road interchange in Summit County. The project has 20 structures that are being purchased and scheduled for demolition. ODOT will make certain the utilities are disconnected and the asbestos removed if needed. Once this is done, Habitat for Humanity then sends their deconstruction crews to the properties to salvage whatever they can for later use. On average, a Habitat crew takes a day to remove items such as water tanks, interior and exterior doors, windows, stainless steel, copper, sinks, countertops and more. These items are later sold in the organization’s Restores. So far, Habitat for Humanity has had access to eight properties.

“We’re giving back all of the items of value for others to use that are less fortunate instead of sending it all to a landfill,” said Program Administrator Kristin Bergdorff.

This has proven to be a great partnership for District 4, and a real benefit to those in need. The office is looking for more opportunities for Habitat donations.

'Teacher Bootcamp' highlights career opportunites

Kaitlyn Maynard, District 3

Remember school career days? Working people of all kinds would volunteer to visit grade schools and speak to classes about their jobs, giving students a look at the possible futures that could be theirs. It can inspire young students to see their education as having a specific value to their lives. It allowed students to make a connection between their hard work and their future in a complex world.

ODOT District 3 has started a tradition in this spirit, playing host to its first ever “Teacher Bootcamp” this past August. Teachers, principals, guidance counselors, and a superintendent all visited the district headquarters, where ODOT employees talked about the job opportunities available within the department. The project was conducted in cooperation with the North Central Workforce Alliance, a new workforce development organization which ODOT co-founded. According to District 3 Business & Human Resources Administrator Matt Miller, the “Teacher Bootcamp” idea is the NCWA’s first attempt to reach out to teachers and educators. “The NCWA was created by a group of business owners and operators from around our region who are struggling to find reliable, skilled employees to fill the positions available within their companies,” said Miller. “The primary focus of the group is to show our young people, their parents and their teachers the different kinds of jobs and careers right in our own backyard.”

The teachers visited seven different businesses over a two-day period. At the conclusion, the teachers rated ODOT as one of their favorite stops. Miller says that this and other outreach programs planned over the next few years will make a real difference to local communities.

“Teachers are often a significant influence in student’s lives, and they help inform the students of potential career paths,” said Miller. “Many of the teachers that visited ODOT said they never even considered that ODOT would have so many diverse job opportunities available for their students. In fact, several said, “I didn’t realize ODOT did so much more than plowing snow!”

Matt Miller contributed to this story.
It’s always special when the parents of ODOT host their children for a day at work. Here are some favorite shots sent in by our district offices.
Meeting Mitch
Nancy Burton, District 6

Mitchell Ray Blackford, ("Mitch" for short) was named the new District 6 deputy director this summer. A graduate of The Ohio State University with a degree in Geological Sciences, he lives in Powell with his wife, son and daughter.

ON HIS FIRST ODOT JOB: I was Madison County transportation administrator 12 years ago. At that time, I never thought I would ever become the district deputy director. I was young and just excited to be a county manager, so I wasn’t thinking that far ahead into the future.

ON HIS FAVORITE THING ABOUT DISTRICT 6: It’s an intense, action-packed district. Definitely not dull around here. The people of this district can react to anything, especially construction, planning, engineering and highway technicians. There is nothing they can’t figure out, no matter the time or day.

ON HIS LEADERSHIP STYLE: I am most comfortable leading alongside the employees. Even if that means under a bridge, alongside the highway, or in a culvert. I’m not comfortable sitting still. It’s much better to get out and go to the problem or issue, rather than waiting for it to get to me. During my first meeting with the team, I said my leadership style was easy. All I wanted from my district, my administrators and my direct reports were three things: Smiles on people’s faces; hard work; and respect for others. If employees do these three things every day, work here at ODOT will be fun.

ON THE ONE THING (OK, TWO THINGS) YOU DON’T KNOW ABOUT HIM: When I was a little boy, I would regularly run to the front window of my house in Sidney to watch the garbage truck. Back when cities picked up their own garbage, I can still remember the orange garbage trucks. I decided then that I was going to be a garbage man or plumber.

AND THE SECOND THING: I love to dunk food in milk. I dunk donuts in milk, graham crackers in milk, cake in milk, even bread. It makes my wife cringe.

LET'S GO
Cruise-In
Ron Poole, Central Office

In August, Central Office hosted a car competition open to members of both ODOT and the Department of Public Safety. It was like time travel for car lovers. Visitors were invited to look over 16 entries separated into three categories by year. Trophies went to Mike Greenwood with the Division of Planning for his 2001 Chevrolet Corvette; Thomas Birnbrich with the Division of Engineering for his 1970 Chevrolet Monte Carlo; and Ron Bauer with the Division of Construction for his 1969 Ford Torino. Those visiting and voting made donations to the Combined Charitable Campaign.

Cruise-In trophies (right) were designed and fabricated by Ronnie Myers, Central Office Garage.
2017 Roadeo/TeamUp/TOP Awards
Making an impact

Rebecca Shirling, District 2

The 30th annual Director’s Cup Roadeo saw District 11’s James Large emerge as the winner of the truck competition, and District 8’s Steve Gacek won the loader competition for the second year in a row! The roadeo was held in conjunction with the 19th annual Team Up ODOT event that included 50 exhibits, and the TOP Awards ceremony that recognizes outstanding employee contributions.

For more photos of this and other ODOT events and projects, visit our Flickr page at flickr.com/ohiodot.