



FALL 2015

INSIDE THE BOX

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PAXTON COMPANIES

INSIGHTS FROM THE FRONT LINE: INTERVIEW WITH PAXTON VAN OPERATOR, TOM MCARDLE

Reflecting back to our 2015 summer season, domestic household goods activity was by far one of the most challenging for our clients' mobility programs, operations and customer service teams, and our van operators. To gain some candid insights, we interviewed one of Paxton's top professional van operators (PVO), **Tom McArdle**.

Paxton: *Tell us how you got into the moving industry?*

Tom: The father of my best friends was an independent operator for an agent in Chicago. I used to work with him in the summer time. I traveled with him for about a year and I thought it was great fun. That seems like a lifetime ago, and here I am today—a PVO for Paxton/Atlas.

Paxton: *Where are you based and what is your philosophy when accepting shipments to load?*

Tom: I live outside of Chicago, but I don't limit myself to any particular area or distance. I pride myself in the cooperative relationship I have with Paxton dispatch in order to service our customers. In the last 16 years, it's been very rare that I turned down a shipment based on location. Sometimes we have to service a shipment 500 miles out of the way, but someone's got to do it. Our clients count on that, knowing that we'll get it done. I think the most successful drivers are the ones who collaborate with both operations and customer service at Paxton, at Atlas HQ, and among our agency family.

Paxton: *What do you see as the major factors that impact you as a professional van operator?*

Tom: Well, that's a loaded question because there are so many factors that impact not only me as an independent PVO, but all van operators in our industry. The obvious things are excessive competitive pricing, increasing discounts, and the higher costs of doing business, hence, decreasing margins. Add to that the ever increasing government regulations and compliance issues. It's getting more difficult and costly to comply. Take the California Carb



compliance rule for example. PVO's must refit their tractors, buy new ones, or lease a tractor at the border just to load or deliver in California. The other major compliance ruling is the restriction on the number of total hours worked and driven. This impacts our ability to pick up an extra 5,000 pound shipment even if I have room. In order to meet the tight delivery deadlines of the shipments already on board, plus compliance, I often have to decline the shipment... not because I want to, but because I have to. That's lost revenue for guys like us every week. Lastly, the large corporate and RMC discounts may benefit the customer and the overall van line, but to an individual van operator that can load only so many shipments per year, those discounts don't translate financially to the driver, because we don't see that annual volume.

INTERVIEW WITH PAXTON VAN OPERATOR, TOM MCARDLE continued

Paxton: *2015 was a record peak season volume year. Can you tell us some pros and cons of the peak season?*

Tom: Business has become so concentrated in the summer months, you have to work as hard as you can with very little time off. As a result, I have to plan better to fill what we call the “war chest” to make what I can and offset the non-peak season. And the shrinking labor pool is another challenge. But the good news is that Paxton and Atlas ensure quality, certified, background-checked labor. So if I’m out of town and need labor in another city, I can count on trained, certified crews on my team. Being away from home 4-5 weeks at a time is an adjustment, but now that my children are older, my wife Jackie and I have grown accustomed to the lifestyle of an “on-road” driver. On the plus side in the non-peak season, I enjoy spending time with my rescue dogs, Sparky & Gertrude, indulge in my hobby of antique cars and trucks, and of course, having a little more time with my wife, Jackie.

Paxton: *How do Paxton and Atlas support you as a PVO?*

Tom: I’ve been with Paxton for some 16 years or more. I had been a General Manager for another Atlas agent and decided to come back to Paxton and do what I love to do. The back office support managing insurance, licensing, finances and Atlas requirements go a long way in helping me to be productive and focus on doing my best on the road and with my customers. Operations and dispatch do a great job of collaborating with me and maximizing load planning. I have to say, the excellent reputation that Paxton has built across the country with the Atlas agency family and our customers gives me pride as I go about my business as a professional.

Paxton: *How has technology changed the way you do business?*

Tom: Well, I was one of the first to pilot the inventory app for Paxton/Atlas, and coming from a guy whose handwriting wasn’t the best on an inventory form, I welcomed this new change. This inventory application alone streamlines the process for the customer as well as the company. Within minutes of a customer signing an inventory, packing form and accessorial services, I can immediately upload into the system before I even turn the keys to my truck on and depart. It simplifies the process for the customer during loading and delivery and reduces the chance for missing items. It was fun



being part of that pilot program, and now all of our Paxton drivers and crews are using it!

Paxton: *You continue to get high customer service scores from your transferring customers. What’s your secret to delivering a successful relocation?*

Tom: For me, it’s all about setting up that pre-call before I arrive. It is crucial. Customers don’t want to hear a window of 8 am to 10 am arrival. I let them know where I am and precisely when to expect me and the crew. I call them personally to introduce myself and review any special concerns. Establishing communication and rapport up front make all the difference. And when I arrive, I’m no longer a stranger! My motto is to be on time and do what you said you were going to do. Try not to inconvenience or rush the customer. Keep the customer happy, stay cool, calm and collective, and they will be too. What amazes me is how fun and easy it can be with many of my customers and the people I work with that make everything go right. I’ve driven along rivers, mountaintops, and some of the most beautiful destinations in the U.S., so I can relate well with our customers who are embarking on their relocation journeys!