

METRO'S 2019 MOTORCOACH SURVEY

Fleets included this year ranged from operations with as many as 611 motorcoaches to as little as two.



SPONSORED BY



METRO Motorcoach Survey Finds Business Growing, Driver Pool Shrinking

Issues recruiting, hiring, and retaining drivers is now impacting operators' bottom line by impeding the ability to grow or expand.

BY ALEX ROMAN Managing Editor



RECRUITING, HIRING, AND retaining drivers continues to be the biggest challenge facing motorcoach operations today, according to 70% of respondents to METRO's Motorcoach Survey. As the issue continues to grow, the challenge is not only resulting in staffing issues, but is now beginning to have an impact on business, with many respondents saying they could in fact grow their operation if they had enough drivers to take on the increased work.

Outside of staffing drivers, 27% of this year's respondents report that escalating costs is their second greatest challenge, followed by staying busy year-round (20%) and finding qualified maintenance personnel (16%). Interestingly, those rising costs are sometimes associated with increased efforts to recruit new drivers, with many operators saying they are paying more to market and advertise for their open positions, or even create or expand Human Resources divisions or implement a CDL training department.

To address issues with escalating costs, operators said they are looking for redundancies and other areas of their business that could possibly run leaner, while a handful reported that they plan on selling old equipment and replacing it with newer equipment to limit repair and breakdown costs.

To maintain business throughout the year, operators said they are concentrating on business opportunities during the off-peak season(s) and better diversification, while also looking at increased training programs and partnering with local trade schools to address shortages in the maintenance shop.

For the 2019 version of METRO's survey, the traditional Top 50 format has been tweaked to expand the number of respondents, to enhance our overview of the industry. Fleets included this year ranged from operations with as many as 611 motorcoaches to as little as two, while also capturing operations that perform a broader range of services. ▶

“
For the 2019 version of METRO's survey, the traditional Top 50 format has been tweaked to expand the number of respondents, to enhance our overview of the industry.
”



10 WAYS FLEETS ARE ADDRESSING THE DRIVER SHORTAGE

As with previous surveys, recruiting, hiring, and retaining driver remains a challenge for a large majority of operators. Here are just 10 ways operators are trying to solve the issue:

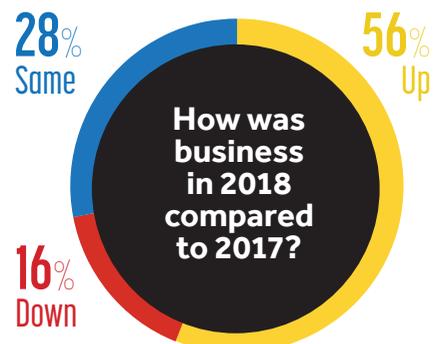
- 1 Referral and hiring bonuses.
- 2 Improved benefits packages and increased wages.
- 3 Implementing a training program that helps drivers attain their CDL.
- 4 Expanding or implementing Human Resources divisions.
- 5 Marketing to specific demographics, including former military personnel, retirees seeking a second career, and younger generations who have fewer obligations and more flexible schedules.
- 6 Increased advertising, particularly on sites like Indeed and through targeted marketing programs via social media, as well as on the vehicles themselves.

- 7 Hiring recruiters and headhunters.
- 8 Attending more job fairs.
- 9 Cross-training office staff.
- 10 Improved scheduling practices, including increased flexibility.

What type of business do you operate?



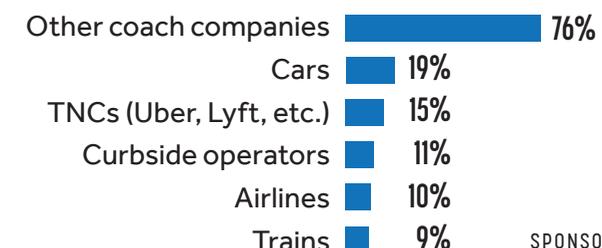
Operations responding to this year's survey had a range of motorcoaches in their fleet that went as high as 611 to as low as two, with 22 motorcoaches serving as the median. A little more than half performed charter services.



TOP: PAUL HARTLEY

Overall, business was up or stayed the same in 2018 compared to 2017 for 84% of our respondents. The large majority of operators reporting an uptick saw increases of less than 10%, with those reporting that business was down also coming in mostly below 10%.

Where does the majority of your competition come from?



SPONSORED BY



BUSINESS AT A GLANCE

Overall, 84% of operators around the U.S. and parts of Canada reported that business was either up or even in 2018, compared to the year previous.

When asked what actions they took to increase business, operators reported a number of strategies, including focusing on expanding some of the services they are already strong in, as well as looking at more business diversification. On that note, some operators reported that they have expanded their business by partnering with the European-based [FlixBus](#) operation, which launched in the Southwest U.S. in May with 27 locations, with plans to expand to New York City and Texas in 2019.

First launching in Germany in 2013, FlixBus manages the technology, ticketing, customer service, network planning, marketing, and sales, while its local SME partners are responsible for the daily operation of buses. As of November, FlixBus had 12 SME bus partners servicing 60 destinations.

Additional ways operators expanded business in 2018, included adding new routes, selling single seats on almost full trips, and increasing advertising.

Survey respondents plan on purchasing 699 new or used vehicles in 2019, with 31% reporting that those plans are firm. Brands they are most looking to purchase include ABC/Van Hool, MCI, and Prevost.

Finally, when asked if they are providing additional training for drivers outside of new hire and refresher courses, 56% of operators responded that they were, with customer service being the hottest topic, followed by increased safety, ADA, and federal regulatory compliance training.

To be included in future surveys, please contact us at alex.roman@bobit.com.

10 WAYS OPERATORS WILL GROW BUSINESS IN 2019?

- 1 New contract, shuttle, or school bus work.
- 2 Add more drivers so business can be increased.
- 3 Hire a full-time corporate development manager.
- 4 Add new vehicles to the mix, including Sprinters, 40-foot coaches with lavatory, and sedans.
- 5 Increase social media push.
- 6 Partner with trade associations.
- 7 Make more face-to-face contact with potential customers.
- 8 Acquisitions.
- 9 Schedule expansion on Greyhound's run abandonments.
- 10 Expand existing relationships.

SPONSORED BY



Which of these actions have you taken to increase business?

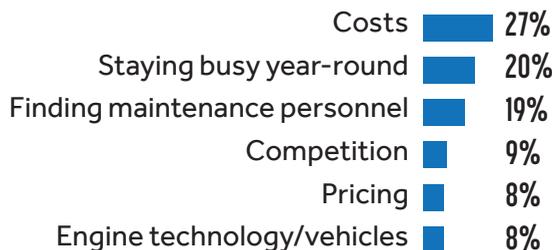


70% YES

Do you use social media for marketing?

30% NO

Other than drivers, what is your biggest challenge?



What platform delivers best results?

