



Driver Loyalty Key to Company's Success

Bennett President David Lowry Works For His Owner Operators, Agents And Employees



Bennett Motor Express President David Lowry never planned to enter the freight industry. But more than 30 years ago, fate and family loyalty intervened to change Lowry's life.

Under Lowry's leadership, Bennett Motor Express (BME) has grown into one of the largest specialized transporters in the nation. Based in McDonough, GA, BME's current fleet holds more than 1,500 trailers, with the capacity to haul more than 40,000 tons.

With nearly 600 owner/operators and more than 140 locations in North America, BME is the largest of seven operating companies within Bennett International Group. In addition to heavy haul and over dimensional freight, the company includes Flatbed, Step Deck, Government Services, and Air & Space divisions.

"We do moves that many transport companies can't or won't do because we've invested in the equipment to get our customer's job done when they want, and how they want it," says Lowry.

Through the years, Lowry has designed and introduced several unique

trailer configurations into the industry. This commitment to both building and buying diverse trailers has helped BME position itself as a leader in the specialized segment.

Today, the company ranks on the top of several annual industry listings such as Transport Topics Top 100 For-hire carriers, and American Crane and Transport's Top 50. But to truly appreciate the company's successful growth, it helps to go back to its humble beginnings nearly 37 years ago.

In 1974, Lowry's stepfather J.D. Garrison and his mother Marcia G. Taylor acquired George Bennett Truck Lines, a small regional carrier with five trucks and six drivers. The couple purchased the company from owner George Bennett, with \$500 and a handshake.



Bennett Motor Express specializes in flatbed, heavy haul and over dimensional freight.

During the late 1970s the company expanded its footprint, eventually operating 30 trucks. Even as industry deregulation in the 1980s added challenges and competition, it also helped the growing company capture new customers nationwide.

"My mom and J.D. were successful in positioning Bennett as a "can do" company that was loyal to both its owner/operators and its customers," says Lowry. "We're a family company, and we've always treated our owner/operators as extended family members."

In 1981, Bennett's family of employees and owner/operators rallied to support Taylor

the company through tough times.

"In the 1980s, you could probably count on one hand the number of woman-owned businesses in the country, and there were very few, if any, trucking companies run by women," adds Lowry. "She didn't know what she was going to do or how she was going to do it." Lowry recalls his mom saying she was going to turn the company over to God for a year, to see how it went.

Taylor also looked closer to home for support. Lowry, the oldest of her three children, quit his farming job in Illinois to help lead the family business. In later years, younger brother Danny and sister Lynette would join the company as well.

BME owner/operator J.W. Jackson was one of many drivers who stepped in to help as well. Jackson had joined George Bennett Truck lines in 1960, and when J.D. Garrison (a former trucker himself) acquired the company, he pledged to keep Jackson and some of the other original drivers on as contractors.

"There are professional drivers, and then there are professional operators. Professional drivers can go a long time before they drop off, but a professional operator does it day after day, and does it well," says Lowry. "J.W. is a professional operator."

Although he didn't know much about the trucking industry before coming to the family enterprise, Lowry was confident he could gain whatever skills he needed from loyal Bennett owner/operators such as Jackson.

Even before earning his CDL, Lowry quickly learned the ropes, joining Jackson on the road hauling cookies to Florida. Lowry would later learn every facet of the business, from dispatching to trailer design, by listening and learning to the men and women who delivered day in and day out for Bennett.

"My mom and I both agree that we wouldn't be the company we are today without the owner/operators, agents and employees that we have," says Lowry. "They don't work for us, we work for them." **bdj**



Lowry, picture here with his mom, Bennett CEO Marcia Taylor, joined the company in 1981 to help run the business after the sudden death of company owner J.D. Garrison.

when Bennett Motor Express faced an unexpected tragedy, the sudden death of company owner J.D. Garrison. Taylor turned to her faith and her extended family to help guide