

Teamwork and loyalty

Strong company culture, employee longevity key to fleet's success

ORGANIZED IN 1899, VF Corp. is a global leader in branded lifestyle apparel, footwear, and accessories with more than 30 brands, 64,000 associates, and revenue of \$12 billion in 2015. The company's business and brands are organized into four coalitions, one of which is VF Jeanswear Inc. (featuring well-known brands Wrangler, Lee, Riders by Lee, and Rock

USAF, PAANG and AF Reserves and served during the Persian Gulf War. He joined General Nutrition Centers in 1992 as a driver and was promoted two years later to transportation supervisor. He progressed through numerous leadership roles of increasing responsibility, such as manager of transportation, interim DC manager, operations manager, and manager

cross-section of NPTC's member base operating nationally or regionally and serving a wide variety of industries and customers.

The private fleet runs 12.5 million mi. per year and consists of 80 tractors (45 operated by driver teams), 310 trailers, and 117 employee drivers who as a group have among the highest level of longevity of any private fleet in America. They average about 15 years of continuous service, some with as much as 30 to 40 years. Annual turnover is very low at 10%, and this is mostly due to retirement. Many drivers have millions of safe and accident/moving violation-free miles; this includes one driver with a service record of four decades and 3.5 million mi.

Driver teams and solo drivers are out five to six days at a time. Driver teams average a half-dozen stops, and solo drivers average 10 to 12. All drivers make drop-and-hook shipments and do not load or unload freight.

"Drivers get paid for delay, but one of our biggest challenges is to reduce delay across the fleet," Hartman explains. "We are putting in a new dispatch system that will be a tremendous help."

Employee longevity is a hallmark of dispatchers and mechanics as well. "We have an incredibly dedicated group of dispatchers averaging 20 to 25 years with the company," Hartman says. "We operate our own maintenance shops and have mechanics with long years of service, some as high as 30 to 40 years." ■

"We're at ... 9.8% empty miles, a record easily within the top 3 to 4% of private fleets in America."

& Republic), based in Greensboro, NC, with truck terminals in Greenville, SC, and El Paso, TX.

VF Fleet, the private fleet serving VF Jeanswear Inc., handles 85% of raw materials and finished goods shipments between eastern, southern, and western port locations and company distribution centers.

"With effective management of for-hire authority, our fleet has 'on-the-fly' ability to adjust operating costs with fluctuations in demand and inventory change by filling extra capacity with fronthaul and backhaul loads of non-VF freight when volume is down," says Bill Hartman, CTP, senior fleet manager and chair of the NPTC board of directors.

Hartman is a 10-year veteran of the

of private fleet operations. In 2012, Hartman joined NEP Broadcasting as fleet director, the position he held immediately prior to joining VF Fleet earlier this year.

"We're projecting total backhaul miles to reach 1.5 million mi. for 2016—compared to 940,000 mi. in 2015—putting us for the year at 9.8% empty miles," he adds, "a record easily within the top 3 to 4% of private fleets in America based on the national average of 20% as reported in this year's NPTC Benchmarking Survey."

The NPTC detailed survey, emailed to all NPTC Fleet Member companies in February, contained more than 100 questions. A total of 92 companies participated in the survey. These companies are representative of a broad

