

Oasis in the Desert



Driver-friendly Model 567s anchor growth strategy for Otto companies

Put any ambitious young man from the frosted, wind-swept North Dakota prairie into the Arizona sunshine and you can surely understand that the new environment would have an appeal.

But for Alan Otto, the shift from the home farm to getting his business rooted in Phoenix back in the mid-1980s was about far more than settling in an improved climate. Back then, he was a man,

a truck (a classic Peterbilt Model 359) and a vision.

Today, Otto Trucking and its Otto Logistics sister companies operate more than 350 power units, more than half of which are Peterbilts. Otto Trucking is a construction materials hauler that has grown steadily in the Phoenix metroplex and is the largest hauler of its kind in the area. Otto Logistics is primarily a waste hauler with operations in Denver, Salt Lake City, Wichita, Kan., and

Colorado Springs, Colo. A separate Otto Logistics division also focuses on waste hauling in Phoenix and Tucson, Ariz.

Surely, Otto has benefitted from settling in the right place at the right time. Phoenix has long been ripe for growth and while it's not the extreme boomtown it once was, the area still sprouts more than 20,000 new homes a year. And Otto has been a hands-on participant in much of that growth, with his company's rep-

Peterbilt Model 567s have become a key part of the growth strategy for Otto Trucking and Otto Logistics.



The Model 567 is a versatile workhorse for Otto Trucking on highway construction projects in the Phoenix area.

utation for reliable performance helping it gather an impressive and diverse list of more than 400 customers, the largest of which account for 7% of the operation's business.

At the root of it all is a hard-working, reliable, driver-friendly fleet. While spec'ed heavier for work on the construction side and lighter for waste hauling, Otto's recent fleet additions — leased through PacLease — are made up entirely of Peterbilt Model 567s, as part of a strategy to maximize uptime, return top dollar at resale time and help ensure that Otto continues to employ the best drivers in the area.

"My philosophy is you pay for what you get," says Otto. "We want the best, most reliable equipment because that helps us get the best drivers. People who take care of their drivers will succeed in the



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trucking business."

Otto won't put just anybody behind the wheel of his new Model 567s. Besides offering the opportunity to operate premium equipment, spec'ed for smooth and easy operation with PACCAR MX-13 Engines and automatic transmissions, Otto offers what he says is the best pay in the area.

"If you can't pay \$2 an hour more for a driver in a truck making \$100 an hour, then you've got the wrong person in the truck," Otto says. "The Peterbilt equipment helps a lot, but pay is important with the drivers we want. They're professionals and they want to make money.

"But first, they have to pass the 'common sense test.'"

Otto is an active participant in driver orientation. And the "common sense test" he gives applicants is part of the process of getting to know prospective drivers — and them getting to know Otto and his expectations.

"One of the questions I ask is, 'What engine was in the last truck you drove?' Someone who aspires to be a professional, quality driver is going to know the answer.

"I'll also tell the recruiter sometimes to go look at what they drove here. If it's a clean, well-maintained pick-up with a CB antenna, hire him.

"We also won't take drivers who are regularly jumping ship. They better have a good excuse why they left their last job."

Even prospects without a perfect score can earn a seat in one of Otto's Model 567s, but they'll start lower on the pay scale with an opportunity to work their way up.

"I tell our prospective drivers that we're a hard company to work for. We'll work nights and weekends.

"But our driver retention is higher than anybody in town. Without quality drivers, we wouldn't be the success we are. We put our drivers in the best equipment out there and pay them well. And our customers know that not only do we have the best drivers in the area, we'll work nights, travel, do whatever we have to do to get the job done."

Otto has long recognized the draw of Peterbilt's vocational products on the resale market.

"They pay top dollar for them," he says. "People like our specs. We've

always tried to get them light but we're really after longevity. So we'll go with 46,000-pound suspensions and 14,600 on the front ends.

"And the Allison and Eaton transmissions on our new trucks, they just run so smooth. Other trucks would be lugging the clutch climbing out of the places we do with a full load. They just help our drivers perform their job better."

Otto says the first of his Model 567s — he's been running them since 2014 — were initially on a 6-year plan.

"We like to keep them as long as we can, but there's a point where it pays to update the fleet while the value is at its highest," he says. "So we might not make six years. It's going to pay for me to update before then."

That update is expected to include new Peterbilts, according to Otto.

"We've got some really great customers. And I like to treat our vendors — such as Peterbilt and the dealerships that have earned our loyalty — like our customers treat us.

"I just think of it as a real strong partnership." **FC**



This Peterbilt Model 348 provides a mobile refueling unit to keep the Otto fleet operating at peak efficiency.