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Sierra Ag Transportation adds assets to mix

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Because of demands from customers, Visalia, CA-based Sierra Agricultural Transportation, Inc., has added several company owned and operated trucks to its list of assets, and is currently in negotiations to add to that fleet.

Chad Lenaburg, who handles sales for destinations ranging from the Midwest to the East Coast said some of the firm's larger customers want the transportation company that they are doing business with to have "skin in the game" so to speak.



"We've seen a lot of fly by night truck
Visalia, CA-based Sierra Agricultural Transportation has added several company owned and

operated trucks to its list of assets. In addition to running a few of its own trucks, it also has leasing arrangements with a half a dozen owner-operators, giving it a fleet of its own that it can control. brokers get into the business and then exit just as quickly without paying the independent owner operators. Those operators then go to the end customers looking for payment,” he said. “Consequently, some of those larger customers are requiring that the transportation companies that they do business with have assets in the form of their own trucks.”

Mr. Lenaburg said the company’s entry into being an asset-based company has worked pretty well. “You are not going to get rich owning trucks but if you can get the business and make a little money as well, that’s all the better,” he said.

Of course, Sierra Ag Transportation has been a stable and financially secure company since it opened its doors a decade ago. The company is affiliated with three produce companies and the firm uses a network of more than 10,000 trucks.

While most of its hauls are handled by independent owner-operators, Mr. Lenaburger said besides running a few of its own trucks it also has leasing arrangements with a half a dozen owner-operators giving it a fleet of its own that it can control.

And he said the added advantage in owning your own trucks is that “you have a billboard with your name on it moving down the road. It’s a rolling advertisement.”

The company continues to focus on temperature-sensitive cargo, and arranges loads for almost every state in the union. Brad Vickers works Texas, Louisiana and the Southeast, while Todd Girnus handles California and the 11 so-called mountain states in the West.

The company’s website touts its service and other intangibles as its top assets: “To exceed our client expectations regarding customer service, honesty, integrity, and fairness while working as a partner to help make their business more profitable and efficient.”

Mr. Lenaburg said it has been a good year and Sierra Ag has done well. He stopped short of crediting a turnaround in the economy for the increased business that the firm has enjoyed but said there is no doubt their business is good. “I know a lot of people are out of work and the economy hasn’t turned around yet for everyone, but we’ve definitely noticed that business is better,” he said.

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