



SHINING EXAMPLE

Looking after its own people - as well as customers - has led to positive results for Alltruck, finds John Challen

There are lots of examples of companies that lead from the top and, while this might be true to some degree at Alltruck, it also has a record of letting employees take charge of their own destiny. It's that kind of approach that has led to the Midlands-based truck rental and contract hire company attaining the coveted Investors in People (IIP) platinum standard.

Formed in 1990, Alltruck was the subject of a management buyout in May 2000, led by the now-managing director Paul Robinson (pictured, inset, p21). Since then, he has overseen steady growth and the expansion from the Alltruck base in Croft, Leicestershire to other sites in Nottingham and Loughborough. The company now has 2,000 fleet assets, 115 in-house employees (an additional 20 drivers operate from customer locations around the country) and a two-lane ATF at its Loughborough site. It also offers fleet management on an exclusive contract covering NHS Ambulance Trust vehicles.

"When we set the business up, one of the cornerstones was creating an environment where all those involved could flourish," recalls Robinson. "The business had got a strong sense of why we were here - not just what we were doing, but also why we were doing it. Ten years later, the company had lost that a bit, so the buyout gave us a platform to re-invent the 'why' aspect."

Robinson stresses that IIP

accreditation was not something that Alltruck specifically strived for so, in 2004, when the first recognition was given, it was more a reflection of how the company was performing in general. "Whenever we've been accredited, it is more someone looking at the company and its values and deciding if we deliver on them, as opposed to telling us what we need to do to reach specific standards," he says.

"You get re-accredited every three years, and up until this accreditation you had to state which accreditation you wanted to go for, and IIP measured you against that standard," he adds. "Because our motivation of having a highly engaged workforce was nothing to do with getting a badge, it was a secondary consideration. This year was the first time IIP could tell us where it thinks we are, hence it came back and said platinum."

TOP OF THE TREE

Of all the IIP-accredited organisations, only 1% gain the platinum standard, so Alltruck clearly impressed during the accreditation process. "The assessment goes very deep into the business - they interview vehicle technicians, bodybuilders and drivers - but we've always taken the view that when it comes to employee engagement, we'll do what is best for Alltruck," says Robinson. "We've invested a lot of money into communication and development of employees. The flipside is that we expect

employees to flourish. So they are empowered, but also held to account.

"We have a knowledge/training academy for all employees, from apprentices who might enter the accounts department, bodyshop or CV workshop, up to graduate management trainees," he explains, adding there is an extensive leadership development programme into a senior leadership team as well as the executive team.

Other external assessments have also proved to be positive for Alltruck. "We measure performance partly in terms of employee engagement, which currently sits at 83% as measured by the Gallup Q12 Index, and that has increased 4% over the past few years," says Robinson. "Productivity has increased by 37% over the past three years and our revenues per employee increased by 9.8% over last 12 months."

EMPOWERING PEOPLE

Robinson maintains that a lot of what Alltruck does to improve efficiency and the workplace environment is common sense. "If you truly empower your employees to make the right decisions, it doesn't matter if it's the people building the bodies, repairing the vehicles or dealing with an incident at the roadside, there is a set of rules that they will adhere to and make decisions against," he says. He adds that keeping staff up to date about the direction of the company also helps. "Some 25% of our workforce were involved in an initiative to set the

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Paul Robinson



future vision of the company to 2023. We wanted a vision that inspired them, which then, in turn, would inspire the stakeholders.”

An example of this inspiration is the project completed by a graduate engineer to develop a lightweight box body to fit to the new MAN TGE low-

height chassis. “We’ve built a prototype for it and the body offers a payload of 1,160kg,” reveals Robinson. “The decision to do that didn’t come from the boardroom or the executive team – it came from the bottom up and we gave him the freedom to develop that prototype himself.”

Robinson states that the value set within Alltruck has to go the whole way through the business, from apprentice technicians to the boardroom. “There

are a lot of compliance issues, but these are covered by wanting to protect the reputation of the customer,” he says. “When a technician sees a customer’s vehicle coming into the workshop that they were involved in the build of, they know the customer, and they look after it as if it was one of their own. It is that provenance and pride that we have to keep in place.”

Having reached the platinum standard – which lasts for three years – Alltruck will be looking to impress further in 2022. The MD concludes: “There is scope to improve the levels of communications with our drivers who are based on sites of our customers, because there is less opportunity for touch points. And we’ve got a course of action in place to make that happen.” **IE**

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