

The Palm Beach Post

“VEHICLE UPTIME IS CRITICAL TO OUR OPERATION SO IT’S VERY IMPORTANT TO KNOW WE CAN GET MINOR THINGS FIXED QUICKLY AND SECURE BACK-UP VEHICLES IF NEEDED. A HUGE BENEFIT IS THE PEACE OF MIND RYDER PROVIDES.”

GARY SLADE

The Palm Beach Post Transportation Manager



AT A GLANCE

CHALLENGE

The company used to own trucks and spent too much time on maintenance issues and not enough on their core business of producing and distributing newspapers. It had no back-ups when trucks broke down, a serious problem in the time-sensitive newspaper business.

SOLUTION

Full-service leasing contract which provides 12 straight trucks for newspaper distribution. Maintenance is performed at a facility 10 minutes from distribution center.

BENEFITS

All vehicle issues are managed and back-ups are available 24/7. Newspaper deliveries are not disrupted due to vehicle issues, even when hurricanes hit. A close relationship with Ryder also provides expertise in the area of specifying equipment and driver training.

A Reliable Partner In Adversity

The opportunity to test the true mettle of a supplier doesn't present itself every day. Mother Nature provided just such an opportunity for the Palm Beach Post over a number of days last fall, when a succession of hurricanes swept through South Florida.

Damage from the hurricanes resulted in several days of curfews, closed businesses and streets virtually cleared of traffic. In many areas, life came almost to a standstill.

But as the area's daily paper, the Post could not come to a standstill. Despite closed and empty gas pumps everywhere, the Post scarcely missed a beat and kept its readers abreast of the ever-changing situation. A lot of that is credited to its full-service leasing arrangement with Ryder.

“Ryder really saved us,” says Gary Slade, transportation manager at The Palm Beach Post. “Our area virtually shut down for two weeks, but Ryder made sure they had fuel for us.”

“They not only kept our delivery trucks fueled, even our editorial staff and any other Post employees could fill up at Ryder's facility. It meant our reporters were able to

get out on the road to cover the story. They literally kept us going.”

The Post has been published daily since 1916. Currently owned by Atlanta-based Cox Communications, Palm Beach Newspapers Inc. employs about 1,300 people and serves a six county area in South Florida. Circulation is as high as 250,000 during peak ‘snowbird’ season from November through April.

Late at night, while most people sleep, the Post presses and employees work at peak levels. Although some sections of the newspaper are printed and shipped out earlier in the day, the time-sensitive front, local and sports sections come off the presses between midnight and 2 a.m., seven days a week.

As soon as the papers are printed, they are loaded on trucks in special wheeled carts and delivered to 13 strategically located distribution centers. Carriers soon arrive to assemble their papers so customers can find them on their doorsteps by 6:30 a.m. weekdays and 7:30 a.m. on weekends.

Since 1994, the Post has relied on Ryder to help them meet this demanding and extremely time-sensitive schedule. In a full-service lease

arrangement, Ryder provides and maintains a fleet of 12 Freightliner FL-70 straight trucks at a Ryder service center located just 10 minutes from the Post building.

Prior to partnering with Ryder, the Post owned and maintained its own trucks. Slade says he and his staff spent too much time on fleet maintenance issues and not enough on their core business of producing and distributing newspapers.

“We had no back-ups,” he says. “If a truck broke down it was a serious problem, given the nature of our product.”

The Post initially chose Ryder as its fleet provider following a competitive bid process. Slade says Ryder was chosen because of a recommendation from the Miami Herald, a Ryder partner for many years, and because of its excellent reputation and national network. Since then, the contract has been renewed every 72 months, without competitive bidding.

“Our theory is, if it’s not broken, don’t fix it,” says Slade. “We may have been able to save a few dollars here and there, but overall our service, our communication and our rapport with Ryder is so good, I don’t know why I’d want to go anywhere else.”

“We always give the Palm Beach Post a very high priority, because of their time sensitive operation,” explains Russell Tolentino, Ryder account executive. “I think they feel as if they’re our only customer because that’s how we try to treat them.”

Under the full-service lease agreement, Ryder technicians do “everything required to keep the fleet up and running,” Tolentino says.

Complete preventive maintenance is performed every 15,000 miles. On a daily basis, trucks fill up at Ryder’s facility, and even if a truck doesn’t need fuel, it pulls into the fuel island and Ryder’s technicians complete a service check including wipers, fluids, tires and oil.

If a truck requires repairs or parts, it’s shuttled to Ryder during the day and returned to duty by the time newspapers need to go out. Ryder technicians are on duty at the shop until 11 p.m., a real convenience for his staff, Slade says.

“We make sure we carefully monitor and maintain the smaller things so they don’t become big problems and cause breakdowns,” Tolentino says. “The result is that bigger problems very seldom occur,” explains Dave Terwilliger, Ryder Maintenance Manager.

“We’ve hired new drivers when our fleet is at the five year mark and they’ve been amazed at what good shape the trucks are in,” Slade adds. “Ryder’s daily maintenance makes a big difference.”

If a truck does report a problem on the road, Ryder sends out a technician and service truck. If a replacement is needed, Ryder supplies one and the newspapers are transferred to the new vehicle. The Ryder Customer Response Center operates 24/7 to provide assistance when the local shop is closed.

“Vehicle uptime is critical to our operation so it’s very important to know we can get minor things fixed quickly and get back-up vehicles if needed,” Slade says. “A huge benefit is the peace of mind Ryder provides.”

Slade says a recent accident involving a Palm Beach Post truck highlighted this for him. “Art Stoop supervised the accident scene and made sure things were done properly,” he says. “Assistance like that takes so much pressure off me, it’s invaluable.”

Ryder also addresses custom equipment needs. They specified special aluminum flooring to accommodate the heavy newspaper carts that are rolled on and off the trucks, and lift gate systems are installed on three of the trucks that deliver to distribution centers without loading docks.

Ryder conducts an annual safety ‘town hall meeting’ for drivers, and keeps the Post informed of new transportation regulations. Ryder even sponsors the paper’s annual employee picnic, as well as its driver safety awards banquet.

“We have excellent relationships with all of the Ryder people, they’re just phenomenal to work with,” Slade says enthusiastically.

Barry Berg, vice president of circulation, for the Post echoed Slade’s sentiments. “Ryder’s expertise in the area of transportation and driver regulations is very valuable to us. We’re able to take those concerns off our plates and concentrate on our core business -- publishing and distributing newspapers.”

“Ryder goes above and beyond to service our account over and over again. We operate as a true partnership, rather than as a leasing arrangement.”