

If Trucks had Wings...

...it would be a perfect world for Kevin Little.

Kevin got into trucking by accident...20 years ago. Born and raised in Cambridge, Ontario, he attended Georgian College for the Civil Aviation program. After four years studying Airline Management, he moved to Cornwall, Ontario to learn to be an Air Traffic Controller at TCTI (Transport Canada Training Institute). Once certified, he was positioned in Winnipeg, MB where he worked as an air traffic controller for 6 months before deciding that wasn't his calling at that time. Although the job appealed to him, his priorities at that age were different and the location where he was posted did not fit.

He took a leave of absence and returned to the Cambridge area to wait it out and began an interim job search.

He wanted to be around airplanes and found an expedite company in Kitchener that wanted to get into air expedite. Thanks to his education and background in aviation, he was hired on a temporary basis...and then never left. "I liked this business so much that I just never felt a desire to leave it. I quickly learned the trucking side of the business and we put both modes together to create a really great niche product; ground and air."

His focus then changed to growing the air expedite side of his branch. The term 'expedite', in this environment, meant unscheduled, point to point delivery. Regardless of destination, Kevin explained that their job was to just make it happen, "The thing I love about the expedited business is that you're saving someone's bacon every day. There's great reward to that for a job well done. The flipside is when you can't execute a solution, someone really has a problem. There is a level of urgency and reward to every single shipment."

Career and life continued normally for Kevin as his tenure in the expedite business mounted.

But, something happened when he hit the 20 year mark. His internal compass seemingly changed direction, pointing where he could not yet see; that proverbial 'itch that cannot be scratched'. He states, "I mused on this feeling for a while, and concluded that sometimes in life, you just need a change." Adding that his decision to seek change was facilitated not from dissatisfaction toward the company he was with, he quickly continues, "On the day that my respected leader, Jim Aitken, passed away, I realized that the only reason I had stayed so long was because of my respect and admiration for the man. He was a tough boss, but he was fair. I owe much of my development and success in this business to him. I keep a plaque in my office that shows a picture of him with a caption that says 'People learn by doing!' which was his motto."

Kevin's decision to seek out change started with the question, "If I created my own business, what would it look like?" He spent the next year or so pecking away at a business plan and kept his eyes and ears open. Fortunately, when Opportunity came knocking, Kevin was prepared. He describes, "About a year ago, I met Mario La Barbera and Bernard Yergeau of Pival International. There was an immediate chemistry between us. The more we talked, the more we realized that we sought the same things. I went from the idea of starting my own business from scratch, to starting a business working with Mario. And, in terms of the likelihood of success, it made a lot more sense to start something new within an already established company. I was fortunate to be associated with the best people in the industry and Pival Expedited began operations on February 1, 2010."

In the transportation environment, a company is only as good as the partners who are carrying the product from point A to point B. Based on Kevin's experience in the

expedited business, he believes that the challenges and benefits of an Owner Operator are different with expedite than in a TL or LTL environment. "We are not in the Truckload business," he explains, "we work with those guys and hope to compliment them. Our business is driven by the truckload that's late, or the truckload that couldn't fit those last 3 skids on it and the shipment HAS to get there."

Kevin goes on to illuminate that because it is a peak and valley business, an Owner Operator has to manage their business in such a way as to effectively operate through the peaks and valleys. It is a highly 'reactive' schedule. The peaks generate lucrative numbers and the valleys; not so much. They have to set their expectations somewhere in the middle while operating in the reality of ups and downs. When they successfully navigate the peaks and valleys over all 12 months of the year, they're rewarded with great income. "We feel our experience can help them a lot with that. At Pival, no Owner-Operator is left on their own to figure it out. We're a team, and a team only succeeds when everyone on the team succeeds."

At Pival Expedite, Owner Operators are dispatched with a common sense approach; first based on which trucks can fulfill the pick-up time and then a review of the number of miles and income each of those trucks have generated in recent weeks. Moreover, because the expedite community is a tight and relatively cooperative community, there are opportunities that do not currently exist in TL and LTL. For example, there is a large network of companies in an organization called TEANA (The Expedite Alliance of North America). "We are tied together in a pool, which has the same concept as a load board except with a membership agreed code of ethics, which alleviates us from the competitive rate pressures that drives the TL and LTL environment. So this allows all of us to share freight, backhauls, capacity and knowledge. Our people do not sit for long, if at all. In essence, we are servicing North America



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with a regional fleet and with partners in a controlled environment."

Kevin believes strongly that money is not the only determining factor for the success of an Owner Operator. He laments that as the economy moves slowly and steadily out of recession, companies will have to be creative in removing barriers of entry because in not doing so,

they will see the qualified driving population continue to decline. "I believe that we are now in a time that people have no incentive to 'want' to enter the transportation industry as an Owner Operator. They have to be drawn in and convinced. Nowadays if you ask someone if they want to be an Owner Operator, they answer... "no,... don't know why...but no, I don't!". Kevin's message to Owner Operators in general is to have some faith that there are companies out there that want to build a better business by leveraging what an Owner Operator can bring to a company.

He also believes that the industry will have to be more accountable to drivers to facilitate education in compliance, which will result in higher retention. "In expedite, what a lot of people don't realize, is that the buying decision isn't generally driven by the carrier's rate first. Relationship and service are generally the first considerations followed by the rate. Companies build their relationship over many years with their base of clients so it is important for a company to also keep consistency in their driver fleet. Thus, we give a lot of attention to proper conduct and respect between company and contractor/employee. It is a symbiotic relationship to be sure. Education on compliance is an important part of the earmark of resources for Pival Expedite."

On a personal note, Kevin is a family man and he spends a lot of time with his kids. He loves to play and watch hockey and when time allows he enjoys a good trail on his mountain bike. He has three children, Mitchell 14, Olivia 6 and Sam who is 4. His wife Lisa is also in transportation, specializing in the licensing and compliance side of the business. 🍁