

Customer Q&A with

Schmitt & Sons

Schmitt & Sons is an employee-owned, diversified company with corporate offices in Lakeville, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis-St. Paul. With nearly 500 vehicles and 600 employees, the company operates school buses, special transportation service vans, mini/mid-size coaches, motorcoaches, and fixed route transit buses for the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority and Metropolitan Council. Schmitt & Sons also operates a full-service maintenance facility.

Connie Messengale
Transportation Manager
Schmitt & Sons Bus Co.
Lakeville, MN



We wanted our drivers to be well-trained in defensive driving and the consistent messaging in the TAPTCO program does that. The training gives them confidence and increases the pride they take in being professional operators.”

What problems, issues, or needs led you to engage Transit and Paratransit Company (TAPTCO)?

We are a unique agency in that we provide many different forms of transportation, from school buses to commuter transit and motorcoaches. We found it especially hard to find materials specifically geared to transit bus operators. When searching for training material we found that larger transit companies and government agencies have their own in-house training materials. As our transit division expanded, we reviewed our current training program and decided it was time to update the program with the addition of classroom training.

What made you choose TAPTCO? What made their services stand out from others?

I met the TAPTCO team at an industry conference. Unlike other training programs, the TAPTCO program covered everything we needed from A to Z and it was the complete package. The videos are professional, the content is modern and every bit of it is relevant to our business. Many of the programs we bought elsewhere in the past were geared toward the trucking industry and contained information we could not use. We'd buy a series of videos and only use one or two of them. With the TAPTCO materials, we use all of them because they are directly related to transit and model our company safety values.

What have the implementation phase and ongoing relationship been like?

As soon as the first TAPTCO programs arrived, we sat down as a team to review the entire program before we started to present it to our operators. We had 22 people present, 10 trainers from my transit division, in addition to representatives from our school bus and special needs groups. The program was very well received. We broke the 24-hour course into 8-hour and 4-hour segments and integrated hands-on time, out of the classroom to get operators moving and reinforce what they were seeing on the videos. We then set out to put every one of our drivers through the course.

How is TAPTCO aligned with the values that drive your business?

Safety is what drives our business and it's the top priority for TAPTCO, too. The customer service piece of it is also big and TAPTCO reflects those values as well.

How is TAPTCO to work with?

The TAPTCO team has always been wonderful to work with. Whenever I call to order new books and other materials, I always receive them in a couple of days.

What have been the greatest benefits of working with TAPTCO?

One of the greatest benefits of TAPTCO's bus safety and driver training programs is consistent messaging. All of our trainers use the same material so every driver who goes through this course gets the same messages. These key messages are repeated and reinforced throughout the course. Between the repetition within the program and the review questions at the end of each module, we know that our operators are absorbing and retaining the information.

Can you share specifically how TAPTCO helped you reach your goals?

We wanted our drivers to be well-trained in defensive driving and the consistent messaging in the TAPTCO program does that. The training gives them confidence and increases the pride they take in being professional operators. This pride is reflected in how they represent the company and how they treat customers. We're investing in them and that makes the operators feel good. We continue to get very positive feedback from operators who complete course evaluations after each session. Everyone in our company drives so we've all been through these courses.

How has working with TAPTCO made your job/work life easier?

The TAPTCO program is super easy to administer, which makes it easy for me and others on our team to fill in when regular classroom trainers go on vacation.

What surprised you or pleased you the most about working with TAPTCO?

I am most pleased with the level of service we get from TAPTCO. The TAPTCO team provides great customer service.

Would you recommend TAPTCO to others? What positive benefits would you emphasize?

I have recommended TAPTCO to a number of small agencies. I always highlight how consistent and up-to-date their products are. And the quality of the content is excellent.