

## FOCUS ON

## DR

# Opportunities abound for local drivers of all types

A large, diversified metropolitan economy like Chicago's depends on local truck drivers to keep moving. Whether for industry shipping, business correspondence or retail delivery, good drivers can usually pick the kind of job they want.

Such jobs could involve driving a semitrailer truck for route deliveries, a panel van, or a regular car for courier services. There are nearly as many different situations as there are employers.

Bloomington-based Don't Shoot the Messenger provides several services with different driving needs. Its courier division provides on-demand deliveries and scheduled inter-office service. Their Go Configure! Division moves entire offices, managing the packing and reassembly at the new site. Don't Shoot also provides home delivery and set up service for area retail stores. For that job, says Human Resources director Bob Curylo, "You need to have a minivan or cargo van, assembly experience, and your own tools. Since you're paid per delivery, you can make a living at this job only if you're able to assemble 40 bicycles a day."

Diamond Expedited of Des Plaines provides on-demand delivery for anything from documents and artwork to full skids and truckloads. They also coordinate route deliveries for a commercial catalog firm, according to Diamond's HR director Brett Schreiber. "Drivers go to Indianapolis each night to pick up orders for the following day. Then at our Elmhurst location, 30 to 40 drivers load the orders and deliver to customers on their route. If they get back in the afternoon, they can run a second route."

Drivers can also specialize with a niche carrier like All Truck Transportation of Chicago. "We pick up corrugated paper products from area manufacturers and deliver to their customers," says Human Resources director Jim Brush. "Our claim to fame is that we're the largest corrugated hauler in the city." Although the client base is local, they still employ 150 semitrailer drivers. And, he adds, it's a more "settled" work schedule. "We don't really have swings in activity. Other transportation companies' customers get much busier around the fourth quarter, then things can be slack the rest of the year. Our business may be considered flat, but it's kept all of our people working."

Qualifications for these jobs vary among companies and with the type of vehicle being used. Car and van drivers should have a current drivers' license and a clean driving record. Truck drivers would need the appropriate commercial license. Applicants may be required to demonstrate their driving ability, and undergo

a background check, U.S. Department of Transportation physical and a drug screening. Some jobs, like courier driving for banks and legal firms, require the driver to be bonded. Often, an employer will help an otherwise qualified applicant get that last necessary piece of paper.

One important distinction is whether drivers need to provide their own vehicles or use company trucks. That can affect whether drivers are paid hourly, by the mile, per delivery or on commission. While retail and office delivery usually means the driver unloads and assembles the cargo, some jobs can be "no touch," where workers at the terminal will unload the trailer themselves. Because many of Diamond's drivers are independent contractors, Schreiber says, they are essentially running their own businesses. "They'll get the tax ID's, set up an office, and maybe hire their spouses to handle the paperwork. I try to help all of our drivers think of themselves as business owners first, because their equipment and expenses are investments that will pay off at tax time."

One thing drivers will all need is firsthand knowledge of driving around the city: how to find the right delivery dock in the Loop, how to get to O'Hare when the expressways are backed up, or the height of bridge overpasses on Route 30 to Valparaiso. "Our drivers can end up going anywhere, from the Loop as far as Indiana or Wisconsin," said Curylo, "you'll really need to know the area."

Managers said they're always on the lookout for good people. Curylo explains, "We don't want to over-hire for our courier division, because we want just enough people on staff that they can make money." Courier drivers can be college students, empty nesters, anyone with a good car and the right skills. Drivers of larger rigs usually come from the ranks of experienced over-the-road, or long distance drivers. "We get a lot of job referrals from our current drivers," Schreiber notes. "Some of them are former OTR drivers who want to stay local. They're tired of driving cross country and they may want to stay closer to their families."

While it's not a 9-to-5 office job, local drivers can still plan their work so they're home in time for dinner. "People who drive for us like the more regular hours and routes," adds Schreiber. "They can make as much money as they want depending on the time they make available to themselves."

— Mark McDermott

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