

FLEET PROFILE

Family matters

Siemens Transportation Group keeps it 'all in the family'

By Steven Macleod

SASKATOON, Sask. – Doug Siemens has seen a family passion for trucking come full circle.

Siemens' father, Erwen Siemens, founded Kindersley Transport, the cornerstone of Siemens Transportation Group, in 1962 when he was just 21 years old. He'd been working for his father's trucking business since he was a teenager and established the company that became Kindersley Transport after buying Partons Transport – a single truck hauling between Kindersley and Saskatoon.

Now 45 years later, Siemens Transportation Group has grown into an international family business, which is made up of 10 divisions and operated by Doug along with his brothers and father.

Doug explained while the company has enjoyed steady growth, Siemens Transportation Group keeps family at the heart of its culture. When the company welcomes another operation under its corporate umbrella, it only impacts the administrative functions.

"We centralize some main functions like human resources and IT," he added. "We don't change the culture."

The efforts to bring newly-acquired companies into the family fold is obvious. From annual softball tournaments and special events such as its company-wide Summer Celebration, to branch-based pancake breakfasts, Christmas parties and barbecues; people have many opportunities to get to know their colleagues socially and allow their families to enjoy time together.

Siemens Transportation Group also gives its employees opportuni-

ties to grow and encourages the youth of the community to explore their career options, too.

Its SAJE program encourages student athletes to explore possible part-time or summer career opportunities with the company.

"We think student athletes have a good work ethic and want to give them an opportunity to build their resumes without compromising their academics or their athletics," Siemens said.

Athletes are not the only students provided opportunities by Siemens, as it also has a program focusing on high school students. Future First is ideal for high school students who want to get a jump start on their careers. Not only does it allow students to work full-time during the summer hours, it provides many learning opportunities and helps the students determine post-graduation plans.

Another student program run by the transportation company is Drive Your Career, which is designed for post-secondary students looking to gain real-life experience in their field of study. Managers try to place students in fields related to what they are studying and schedules are set up with the flexibility which students may require to manage work and education.

"We develop jobs with the mindset that education is the first



ALL IN THE FAMILY: Kindersley Transport, part of the Siemens Transportation Group, represents part of the empire the Siemens family has grown.



THE SIEMENS HEAD OFFICE



THE SIEMENS TRAINING CENTER

priority," Siemens added.

Siemens also runs a couple of programs specifically designed to bring more technicians and drivers into the industry.

Through its long-running apprenticeship program, Siemens has found a strong core of employees; and Ken Price, corporate director of fleet services, noted the program is a solid foundation for a career.

"It's a great opportunity for young people to get into the industry," he explained. "The apprenticeship program is the place to build loyalty."

Vehicle technicians can get hired with their own tools and no experience through the apprenticeship program. Siemens Transportation Group also pays the fees to start up with the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trades Certification Commission.

The company also tops up EI to 95%, including the two-week waiting period, while the technician is in school and on EI. As well, with Siemens Transportation Group doing most of its work in-house, technicians are getting the best possible experience.

When it comes to recruiting new drivers for the company, Siemens has stretched itself worldwide to bring in new employees. Siemens Transportation Group established Going Global in 2004, a recruitment initiative for international drivers and mechanics looking for new and exciting employment opportunities in Canada. Going Global was started to address the driver shortage; and the initiative has paid off for Siemens, with more than 250 international drivers being hired since the program's beginning.

With all the programs in place for student-athletes, students, apprentices and international drivers, Siemens still found time to address the needs of its current drivers, with a special program and a brand new toy.

Siemens added the company consistently tries to improve its relationship with its clients and build on its excellent employee base.

"We're always looking for innovative ways to improve customer service and attract above-average employees," he said.

SWAT is a program for drivers who have recently gotten their class 1 licence and are looking to gain real-world experience through the network of Canadian and American highways, mountains and other challenges.

The new drivers are paired with trainers to make the transition from trainee to experienced driver easier, a system that is very effective, noted former SWAT trainee Garth Many Grey Horses.

"It was an awesome experience. I gained lots of experience in city driving, mountain driving, border crossing, customer relations and much more," he explained.

On the technology side, one of the recent innovations in the company is the newly-purchased \$150,000 state-of-the-art driving simulator, which is currently being worked into its driver training curriculum.

The curriculum is designed to

give driver trainees multiple learning experiences, including classroom time, computer-based training and time behind the wheel of a truck.

Kevin Wald, driver development manager, said the simulator would also be used to help drivers who have had accidents or other violations to refresh their skills and allow trainees to explore all possible weather and road hazards without extra wear and tear on a vehicle.

The simulator was initially purchased to make the transition to North American driving easier for international drivers, and was recently put through its paces with the company's first-ever Top Driver Challenge, which was won by international driver Kevin Newbon.

Despite numerous company programs and a concentrated effort to provide exceptional customer service, family and family values still top the list of priorities for Siemens Transportation Group.

The company is a Western-Canadian grown, Saskatoon-based operation with strong community ties. Redberry Bible Camp, Central Haven Personal Care Home and Royal University Hospital have all benefited from the company's support. Siemens explained the donation to Royal University Hospital was a great way of supporting Saskatoon's growing community.

"Our family thought that doing something to support the hospital would be a long-term way of helping the community and the hundreds of people who need access to good health care," he commented. Siemens credited the company's success is a result of its duration in the transportation industry and its dedicated employees and contractors.

"We're a Western Canadian carrier with a reputation for good service," he added. "Our longevity has kept our customers and employees loyal." □

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FAMILY BUSINESS: Doug Siemens (pictured) runs Siemens Transportation Group along with an extended family.

A family affair

The Siemens Transportation Group is a privately-owned company with 10 companies under its corporate umbrella. The trucking business is truly a family affair for the Siemens' and many members hold management positions in the various divisions.

Erwen Siemens is president and general manager of Siemens Transportation Group; oldest son Doug is vice-president; Terry is general manager at flatdeck carrier Edge Transportation Services; Tom is general manager at truckload carrier Harv Wilkening Transport; and Darrell is truckload manager at Kindersley Transport's head office.

The family affair doesn't end with the company's namesake; several employees have family members working throughout Siemens Transportation Group's 10 divisions, which also include Tiger Courier, Triangle Freight Services, Hi-Tech Express, Mid-Sask Ag Services, Quill Transport, PMK Logistics and Creekbank Transport. □