

# Choose the Wrong Limo Company for Your Company, and You Could Get Taken for a Ride.

*By John M. Greene*

When you're responsible for selecting a ground transportation service for your company, you want to be sure that your decision will solve problems, not create them. Day after day, you want to be able to say, "I made a good decision."

Make a bad decision, and it's your CEO arriving at the airport just in time to see his plane takeoff because the driver took "the scenic route." Maybe it's the VP of your biggest account being picked up in a limousine operated by a multi-lingual driver, none of which happens to be English. Or your out-of-town party of eight getting shoehorned into a car designed to comfortably fit a party of five.

Choosing the wrong limousine company to be your vendor can be a costly mistake, not just financially but also in terms of damaged client relationships and lost business. But there are steps you can take to make sure everything goes smoothly, whether it's picking up and dropping off one person at an airport, or moving 50 people from a hotel to a downtown convention center. And it shouldn't matter if it's in your own city, or somewhere on the other side of the country.

Here are the steps you should take to assure you find the right limousine company to meet your needs. And once you do, you'll establish a long-term business relationship you can count on.

- 1. The lowest price may not be the best price.** Don't automatically jump at the lowest price you are quoted. Cost shouldn't always be the determining factor. Maybe the price is low for a reason. Maybe the cars are 5-10 years old. Maybe the driver isn't an employee but someone's uncle who is getting paid "under the table." Maybe the "office" is a toll-free number that rings in someone's kitchen. It's important to do your homework. Find out if the price really is "too good to be true."
- 2. Know the people you are doing business with.** If at all possible, visit the office, see the operation, talk with the staff, and observe how the dispatcher

interacts with the callers. And, of course, get references. Visit the website to see if testimonials and satisfaction surveys are posted.

- 3. Know the cars and the drivers.** Find out about the safety records of the cars and how often they are maintained. Are they more than two years old, and if so, how much mileage is on them? Know how the company chooses its drivers. What kind of a background check is done? Are they bonded? Is there a drug and alcohol-testing program in place? How long are they on a shift?
- 4. Can the company handle a job anywhere in the country?** You shouldn't have to take time making numerous calls to have your party depart in Boston and then be picked up in Denver. Instead of doubling your efforts by checking out two limousine companies, use a company with a strong affiliate network. That way, the carrier you choose to pick up your party *here*, will do all the necessary due diligence to make sure the company that meets your client *there* passes the same stringent background checks they undertake for their own drivers.
- 5. Does the company know the area?** Since time is often a key factor when moving people around, it's important to know that the driver is familiar with the layout of a city. This includes up-to-the-minute road conditions and peak traffic patterns. It's equally important that the driver be familiar with airport layouts, particularly since 9/11 changed the pick-up and drop-off procedures in many of the terminals.
- 6. Can you reach the driver when you need to?** Make sure you can easily reach a driver if there's a problem, and that the call goes directly to a person at the company, not an answering service or, even worse, an answering machine. And make sure the company has access to real-time flight information provided directly by the FAA, so you can be alerted if there are scheduling problems with an arrival or departure.
- 7. Check the final invoice carefully.** When you receive your bill, check it over carefully. Make sure the prices quoted match the invoice. Mistakes can happen.

By following these guidelines, the odds are very good you will have a satisfying experience with whatever limousine company you choose. But most important of all, you will have peace of mind.

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