

# Carrier, drivers climb on board with spring-ride suspensions

## A&M Carriers leases trailers to accommodate growth

Dave Shaw runs a trucking company with low driver turnover, and he's proud of that. "We're very fortunate," the general manager of A&M Carriers near Louisville, KY, says of his company's ability to keep drivers.

It's no accident. A&M positions itself as a family-oriented business that attracts good drivers who know they'll have longevity at A&M.

"We make sure drivers get a lot of quality family time," Shaw said. "That's probably the number one thing in retaining drivers. We don't force dispatch. We treat people like they would want to be treated, and that goes a long way."

In this age of high driver turnover, companies are looking for any edge they can get to keep drivers.

A&M's good driver retention helps the company succeed in business. That's because the company can count on having drivers available to haul loads and meet shippers' needs. And that's important for a carrier that distinguishes itself through good service.

### In the beginning

A&M was founded in 2004 as a flat-

bed carrier. But when the construction industry plunged, the carrier shifted; it found a niche with the auto industry and has grown steadily.

To accommodate growth, A&M rented trailers from multiple providers. "We took a few out from XTRA," Shaw said. "I was happy with the service and equipment. We never turned back. It's been a good partnership and we've been pleased to have XTRA grow with us. They've always treated us well."

### Keys to growth

A&M distinguishes itself through good service and straightforward communication.

"We're a service-oriented company," said Shaw. "But beyond that, we tell folks the truth and stand by it. If we're going to be late, we give customers a heads-up call to let them know what the situation is. We don't want any surprises with our customers. If a driver oversleeps, we let someone know. We shoot straight. That's the best policy. And it's worked for us."

With 65 trailers on lease from XTRA, Shaw says equipment leasing has



**Headquarters**  
Elizabethtown, KY

**Type**  
Regional truckload carrier

**Specialty**  
Auto manufacturing

**Delivery**  
650-mile radius from headquarters

**Drivers**  
37 company drivers, one owner op

**# of Trailers in Fleet**  
87, mostly vans, a few flatbeds

**# of Tractors in Fleet**  
38

been a key growth strategy, as well. The reason: maintenance and cash flow.

“We made a conscious decision to go with leasing,” he said. “Bottom line, cash is more plentiful when you’re leasing. It’s easier for us to maintain the trailers with an equipment lease, too, so it just makes sense for us.”

## Driver retention and spring-rides

So flash forward to 2014. A&M needed more trailers to keep up with growth. They chose to lease additional composite 53’ vans with spring-ride suspensions from XTRA Lease. How would this move affect A&M’s drivers? After all, some people argue that the difference between air- and spring-ride suspensions could affect driver retention.

The answer: not at all. Previously, A&M had exclusively leased air-rides. Since the carrier added spring-ride vans, it’s been business as usual.

“We’re pleased with the trailers, and so are the drivers,” said Shaw. “We haven’t had any complaints since we went with the spring-rides. In fact, I’ve heard from one of the drivers that he can’t even tell the difference.”



“I didn’t hesitate,” added Shaw of trying XTRA Lease spring-ride vans. “We have one customer who manufactures auto glass. And they require us to haul air-ride trailers. So my drivers know to pick up one of those when hauling for that customer. Otherwise, I didn’t have any problem leasing spring-rides.”

## Why XTRA Lease?

When it comes to trailer leasing, why does A&M choose XTRA Lease? Shaw describes XTRA as a company that’s easy to do business with. “They’re an excellent company,” he says. “I find that their price is competitive and the service is excellent. Whenever I’ve needed anything, XTRA Lease has responded. I would recommend them to other companies needing rental or leased trailers.”

Shaw also would recommend spring-ride trailers to others who might be hesitant.

“I’d definitely recommend them,” he said. “Not only does it help with cost, it will help us in the future with maintenance. The trailers are still new, so it’s not affecting us now. But if an air-bag blows, I’m out at least \$250, plus two days of downtime for the trailer and a late delivery.”

## Summary

- A&M Carriers needed additional vans to keep up with growth.
- Company chooses to lease rather than purchase to maintain better cash flow.
- Leases XTRA Lease 53’ composite vans with spring-ride suspensions.
- Chooses XTRA Lease for excellent service, competitive rates and new, quality trailers.
- Sees no effect on driver retention with spring-rides; driver says he “can’t even tell the difference.”

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