

SAY WHAT YOU DO, DO WHAT YOU SAY



Two mottoes have taken Todd Claiborne, owner of Claiborne Hauling Contractors LLC of Knoxville, Tennessee, from a solo operation to a vertically integrated company with over 150 employees. His first motto was “Never say no.” That one, coupled with a lot of hard work and 24-hour days, took him from driving one dump truck to managing a fleet of 12, and then expanding into the grading business.

The second motto — “Say what you do, do what you say” — explains why he kept expanding. “I had trouble getting subs to do what they said they were going to do,” relates Claiborne. “I’d have trucks go to a job, their people wouldn’t show up, and it would cost me money. So I was forced into other businesses because no one would do what they were supposed to. I got into

excavation which also kept the hauling company growing. The roll-off company came about because I’d send skid steers to load jobsite containers and the companies wouldn’t show up to empty them; I’d have to send the employees home early. We went into heavy hauling so we could move our own equipment and it has grown into a business of its own now, moving for other grading contractors and dealers. We run 25 low-boys now and operate in the lower 48 states.”

Ever on the lookout to save time and money, when Knoxville’s section of I-40 was closed by Tennessee’s SmartFIX40 project, he set up a distribution yard on the west side of town along with buying 12 extra trucks, in order to stockpile aggregate and serve his customers without traffic delays.

“I look for those niches out there and tie it back to a central core. Each of the businesses has got to help the others. We’ve actually started buying property and developing it ourselves.”

HANDS-ON APPROACH

Claiborne is an equipment guy. He ran his own dump truck for years, then ran a backhoe when he added the grading business. Even today, his love of equipment is evident by the care he takes in studying the specs before making a purchasing decision. “I really know the specs. I’m very methodical about it. That’s one thing that helps me do a little bit better than the competition. I figure what I need and, if necessary, have it specially built and geared to the job.”

The six cubic-yard specialty bucket is made by TAG.



“ In addition to price, I buy service and support. ”
– Todd Claiborne, Owner, Claiborne Hauling Contractors LLC

Through the years, Claiborne has run a lot of different wheel loaders. “We’ve had John Deere, Volvo, and Cat®, but when we started doing some demos, the latest generation of Kawasaki loaders really caught up to them. All of our people, all of our operators, really like them. The loaders aren’t too complicated. I feel you don’t have to overwhelm the operators with 15 bells and whistles they’ll never use, and I don’t want to pay for them. I like to keep things a little simpler.

“Before I bought our first Kawasaki, I went online to see how many hours these machines had before being sold and what their condition was. I called about some of those for sale and asked what kind of problems they’ve had. End users were getting 14 to 15 thousand hours, and that’s pretty good.

“In addition to price, I buy service and support. I’ve got to be able to get them both — is the dealer going to step up to the plate? I’ve had trouble in those areas with other



Todd Claiborne, Owner of Claiborne Hauling Contractors LLC with Chris Etters, Grading Division Manager along side of the Kawasaki 90ZV-2.

brands. So far, with our Kawasaki dealer, the longest we’ve had to wait is an hour. Service is huge. Time is money in my business. It’s all about time. If my loader is down, I can’t

load my trucks and then I can’t get gravel to my customers. My customers have subs waiting, they can’t pour concrete, and on down the line. There are so many people

beyond me that depend on this machine. We've got to give our customers a reason to use us over the other truckers in the area. So we've got to provide better service and consistency."

SPECIAL TREATMENT

One unique way the company provides better service is through its selection of themed trucks. Painted to represent diverse national and local institutions like the University of Tennessee, U.S. Army, Rubber Ducky, Tony the Tiger, and MIA/POW, the trucks are huge favorites with their customer base as well as the general public. And it should come as no surprise the company has a clean machine policy. "You could eat off of the floors of our trucks," says Chris Ethers, Grading Division Manager. "Our drivers are proud of their equipment and really take the time to form relationships with our customers." Deep respect for their community is evident.

Another specialty the company has isn't one visible to the public, but is appreciated by their customers: Claiborne uses a specialty bucket on their wheel loaders. With a standard bucket, an operator has to load a truck in the middle, the front, and the back. The six-cubic-yard specialty bucket, made by TAG, is a lot wider with flared sides, so the load dissipates better and more evenly. It has cut their loading cycles down to three passes per truck. This enables each loader to load six to eight more trucks a day while saving fuel, making the bucket a win-win proposition for both the company and their customers.

OPERATOR FAVORITES

Chris Martin runs the company's new West Side Yard, the one established to circumvent the problems created by the I-40 construction. His yard uses a 90ZV-2. "It's a perfect three-pass loader," Martin says. "I ran a Kawasaki myself when I worked in

Florida about 15 years ago — it was a great machine. My operator here loves our 90. I can't get him out of it. It's a good machine."

Another operator, David Hokkanon, adds that he really likes the visibility. "The response is great, the power that you need is great. Everything's within arm's reach and the cab is comfortable. You can tell they really thought about the operator when they designed the cab. Our operators who had never run Kawasaki found it easy to learn. We all like Kawasaki the best."

"So far our Kawasakis are doing a good job," says Claiborne. "You've done a good enough job to hook me. I'm definitely a shopper, very methodical. And I've got to put it out there to my operators to make sure they are onboard from the start. They liked them. It was simple, the power was there, and the ride. And that's why we bought four the first round."

Claiborne Hauling Contractors is serviced by A.E. Finley, Knoxville, Tennessee.



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