



## Being fabulous everyday

Most eighth-graders are usually happy enough to go on a field trip; few ever take the reins and actually plan the entire trip, and even fewer parlay that experience into starting their own charter operation by the age of seventeen. Then again, few people are like Raymon J. Land III.

Land began Fabulous Coach Lines with a single Van Hool motorcoach that he found on the Internet — his parents helped him sign for the loan — after planning trips throughout high school for groups, such as the Future Farmers of America, and being disappointed with the motorcoaches that would show.

Eight months later, Land purchased his second coach to replace the initial Van Hool, then soon another followed by another.

"The first six or eight vehicles that I bought were all supposed to replace that old coach," says Land. "I'm still buying vehicles today saying that I'm going to get rid of it. Guess she's lucky."

Although he's admittedly learning on the fly, Land's experience and focus on running a tip-top operation belies his years.

"We try not to cut corners, so we go with more monitors in the cabins, we have red carpets that we roll out every time we board a group and our drivers wear long sleeve shirts and ties that are different from your traditional chauffer-type uniform," says Land.

The operation is also attempting to update its fleet so that its coaches aren't older than 2006. Land recently purchased two new H3-45's from Prevost, which feature new amenities, such

as iPod jacks, Xbox 360's and in-dash navigation systems that will become the norm for all future coaches.

Land says that what really separates Fabulous from the competition, though, is its interaction with customers.

"It's not rocket science, it's just being nice to people," he says. "Though we're not perfect, we're trying to be, and the least we can do is be really nice."

To help simplify quotations and bookings, Fabulous uses Distinctive Systems' Coach Manager product, which will also help to improve the process on its updated Website. Land says that the new site will enable clients to set-up their own accounts through the system online and view any upcoming or past trips, any payments that have been made and requests for time changes.

To help improve driver performance, Fabulous uses a rewards system that adds or subtracts points based on various performance indicators, such as customer feedback, driving record and following protocol. Each point, Land explains, represents an amount of money, and at the end of each quarter, drivers with positive points are given a bonus check at a company-wide meeting. The quarterly meetings also include some type of cookout or party to reward Fabulous' staff.

Continuing its focus on customer relationships, Land contacts each and every customer after a trip to ensure that they had a pleasurable experience. He'll use the feedback to make improvements to the operation's 10-plus page checklist for the perfect charter, which he says they haven't hit yet but are always striving for.

"The perfect charter is something that has grown over time," Land explains. "It just goes to show that each and every day we're trying to be a little more fabulous."

### At a Glance

Motorcoaches: 11

Fleet mix: Prevost, MCI, Van Hool

Employees: 6

Drivers: 33

Service area: Southeast, U.S. and Canada

Services offered: Charter, tour, athletic

Year started: 2004

Average annual mileage: 800,000

Annual ridership: 94,000

President: Raymon J. Land III

