

Keep On Truckin'

Factoring president taps “coach” for candor and business clarity

David Baker doesn't ask for help. Never has, never will.

Or, so he thought. When Baker started his own company in 1995, he used his high energy and high-speed “pedal to the metal” determination to develop the business, grow the company and find success as a young Texas entrepreneur. And did.

Today, Baker is president of Apex Capital L.P., a Fort Worth company with 91 full-time employees experiencing double-digit annual growth and managing at least \$50 million per month in financial transactions. The company serves small and mid-sized trucking and transportation firms, helping them manage their cash flow by offering factoring services and programs. Factoring is the process of purchasing commercial accounts receivable (invoices) from a business. Companies often choose factoring services to provide consistent cash flow.

It all seemed great to Baker. But ask an employee what they thought about Baker's style, demeanor and management approach?

“You'd probably have several bite marks, if you had asked that question five or six years ago,” said Baker with a grin. “I'm not exactly the Mr. Rogers-type. I'm naturally hard driving, impatient and very direct.” The result: A company of managers and employees who were more than qualified and capable, but often offended and exasperated. Employee retention rates were low. Recruitment, even worse. “I knew something had to change, I just didn't realize it had to be me. And I didn't know where to start.”

Quick Facts

Apex Capital L.P., Fort Worth

- **David Baker, president**
- Company size: Approx. \$300 mill. ('06)
- Specialty: Financing and factoring for the trucking and transportation industry
- www.apexcapitalcorp.com

Resource Link, Dallas

- **Lori Link, president**
- Company size: >\$1m ann.
- Specialty: One-on-one executive coaching and employee selection and development
- www.resource-link.com

Lessons Learned:

- People matter most
- Identifying and adapting others' behavioral styles can advance your goals, your team, your company
- Coaching executives one-on-one—and employee selection and development—deliver a definitive return on investment

Finding The Coach That Could

Baker had determined to change, find a mentor and get his team engaged and appreciated. He started with Google, typed in “personal coach” and found hundreds of listings. He called one up and got started. Within weeks, he began to re-consider.

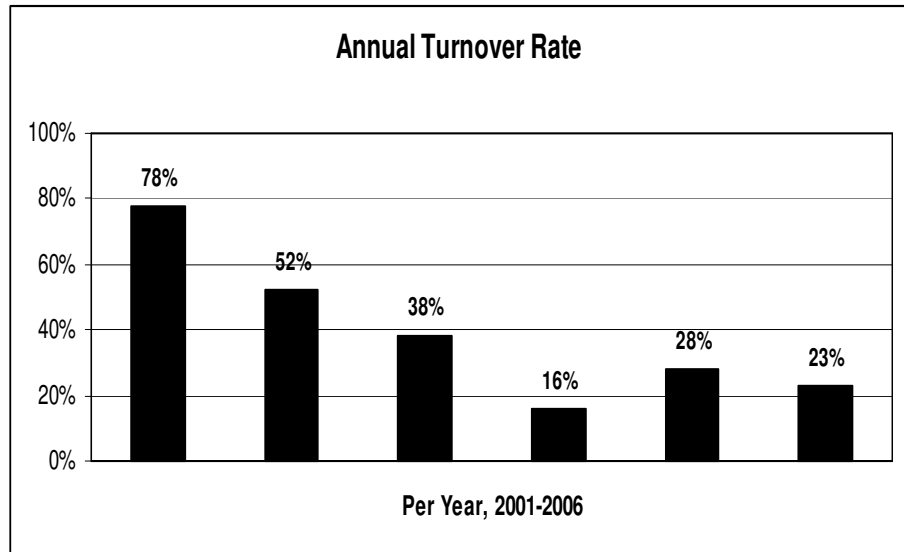
“I decided it wasn't for me even though I knew I needed someone to help me jumpstart my self, my company, my team ... It just

wasn't working," said Baker. He went back online and did another search and found a name he remembered from years past: Lori Link. "I thought, 'Hmmm, I know her and worked with her at a company a long time ago. What the heck, I'll give her a call.'" That was four years ago. Today, Lori, president of Resource Link, a Dallas coaching services firm focused on executives and teams, is woven into the fabric of Apex Capital L.P.

The Resource Link approach, says Baker, is about performance improvement, team building and individual development that impact the bottom line.

"If you want to talk return on investment, it's unbelievable," said Baker. We can look at where we were in 2003, especially in terms of turnover rates, and see how Resource Link helped transform our organization by giving us a personalized, process-driven approach to identifying, assessing and building great managers and employees."

Baker said that Apex's employee turnover rate in 2001 and 2002 were 78 percent and 52 percent, respectively. When Resource Link arrived in 2003 and began working with Baker and the entire team, turnover dramatically dropped. The company went from 52 percent in 2002 to an average of 22.3 percent of turnover between 2004 and 2006. Its lowest turnover rate dropped to 16 percent one year.



Additional ROI includes:

- An average growth rate of 49 percent since 2003, thanks to Link and an incredible team of employees, said Baker.
- Employee turnover has improved from a high of 78 percent to less than 16 percent
- Increased overall company productivity despite growing from 25 employees to more than 90
- Kept clients happy during high-growth, with client retention improving 65 percent

In 2006, *Texas Monthly* magazine named Apex Capital as one of the top 60 companies to work for in Texas. "Being recognized as a great place to work is a far cry from having one in two employees leave the company," said Baker. "She showed me—and the great people I work with—that our strength is our people, and that our combination of excellence and leadership is a key competitive advantage."

Getting Clear on Coaching

Baker typifies thousands of executives and entrepreneurs, says Link, who succeed because they work hard, they're driven, goal oriented and never look back. "But at some point they look around the room. There's no mentor, peer, partner or employee whom they can trust for truth, candor and objectivity," she said. It gets even more difficult when you add executives and employees. The entrepreneur is more isolated yet is called on to manage a group of people who may or may not get along. It can be a disruptive, degenerative environment fueled by disparate personalities and agendas, or just an ongoing malaise minus leadership and purpose. Regardless, these are signs pointing to chaos and potential business failure.

"It's my job to help the entrepreneur get on course and stay on course," said Link. "David called me in, initially, to help him assess his personal strengths and weaknesses, and how he could build a company with productive employees. His uniqueness is that he really wants to build his people and develop them. It's not just lip service." Baker and Link started with a personal and in-depth session that included a personality inventory that helped define behaviors, motivations and more. From there, they developed a road map for helping Baker and his team better lead and manage on a day-to-day basis.

"Initially, Lori helped me understand how I'm wired, and then why that understanding is so valuable," said Baker. Lori agreed.

"David was very good at intimidating his employees, without even knowing it," said Link. He'd overwhelm them. So, that's where we began. He had to learn how to let others

learn, think, plan and lead," said Link. Today, Baker says he can better identify and understand different personality types and adapt his approach to fit their needs. "I have better relationships and better results. I've been able to build an effective management team, thanks to new approaches and process," he said.

Today, Link not only supports Baker, but is involved in all new hires. She meets quarterly with Baker and employees. "I make sure she's a constant at Apex because coaching is her calling," said Baker. "I want to lead a team of people who not only enjoy their work but are naturally good at what they do. As a result, they are happy employees. That means I have happy clients. And happy clients keep you growing."

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For more information, contact Resource Link at coach@resource-link.com, or visit the Web site, www.resource-link.com.

What A Company President Says About Hiring a Business Coach

David Baker, founder and president of Apex Capital L.P., in Fort Worth, Texas, knows about the value and validity of a business coach, what they do and why. He and his company have used Resource Link, a Dallas business coaching services firm since 2003. Here are Baker's tips for hiring a great business coach.

1. Not all coaches are created equal. Test, measure, and meet at least three times before making a commitment
2. Happy employees = happy clients; happy clients = growth
3. Success hinges on people and how they're treated. To advance employee retention and recruitment, start with yourself.
4. Know your personality—and those of others around you. This will encourage personal and corporate growth, ideas and creativity
5. Get past yourself, know you have a core competency but need others for objectivity and candor
6. Avoid “doing it all” all the time. Balance your life, avoid isolationism and admit your “blind spots”
7. Working well with people –all types of people—takes a lot of work
8. Getting your team engaged with a coach proves you are serious about your company, employees and their needs
9. Coaching can have definable outcomes and ROI, from improving employee recruitment and retention to customer retention, work culture satisfaction and more
10. Hire better and faster by knowing what to look for
11. Employees want leadership, vision, passion and purpose. Lead your people and you'll get good employees.

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