



Vehicle tracking: the road map for a happy workforce

Fleet management technologies can deliver a wealth of business benefits, from boosting productivity and driving efficiencies to meeting legal obligations and improving customer service.

Employees, however, can feel threatened by change, particularly by new technology – and all the more so when their activities behind the wheel are being monitored.

So how should vehicle tracking be introduced to your fleet, and any privacy concerns from staff allayed? Get it right and everyone will be buying into a system that will improve operational processes, employees' working lives and the company's bottom line. Get it wrong, and it will be met with resistance and its potential will never be realised.

TomTom Business Solutions outlines best practice in the following key strategic steps:

- 1.** Ensure your drivers know you have an obligation to manage your assets as efficiently as possible. Explain that this is for their benefit, as well as the company's balance sheet. Improved efficiency means more money for wages, bonuses and pay rises. This is especially relevant in tough economic times and, in some cases, can mean the difference between job security or having to make redundancies.
- 2.** Explain how telematics will benefit the workforce and why drivers should welcome it. The driver benefits are many, including:
 - Less stress behind the wheel with connected satellite navigation, including tools for traffic avoidance.
 - Protection against false claims regarding customer disputes, vehicle damage or driving violations.
 - Less laborious paperwork with reporting functionality eradicating the need to complete mileage expense sheets
 - A more equitable distribution of work brought about by greater workforce visibility.
 - Proof that company vehicles are used for business and not personal use so that benefit-in-kind tax can be avoided. For a light commercial vehicle less than four years old, this tax liability stands at £3,000.
 - Safer working conditions. Managers, for example, can keep tabs on the lone workers that may be transporting high value goods, and can ensure employees don't spend too many hours driving without a break.
- 3.** Be transparent by making drivers aware of the reasons for introducing vehicle tracking from the outset, not after it's been installed. If necessary, involve relevant union representation in this exposition process.

Explain the business benefits so staff understand the move does not reflect a lack of trust in the workforce. Those benefits extend from improving fuel economy and asset security to proof of job attendance and legislative compliance; the list goes on...

Telematics should not be positioned as in any way being a 'spy in the cab'. From a tracking perspective, explain to your employees that the technology is tracking the vehicle – the company asset – and not the individual.

4. Formalise the process of informing staff of the move to introduce vehicle tracking by putting it in writing to them, so that there is no misunderstanding or ambiguity. Clarify what it will mean for them and the business operationally, and what impact, if any, it will have on their job day-to-day. Never attempt to install the technology covertly.

Offer employees the opportunity to ask questions and provide them with a clear and open channel of communication.

5. Make sure you know the system inside-out before you talk to employees about it. If you don't know what you're talking about, your drivers won't have confidence in the game plan.

6. In some cases it may be possible to involve employees, or an employee representative, in the technology's selection process. This can help to make employees feel valued and can have knock-on benefits across the business.



7. Although we live in a high-tech world, many employees are still intimidated by technology, whether mobile workers, back office staff or even management.

TomTom Business Solutions' systems are user-friendly and intuitive but extra support and training should be offered to anyone who struggles to adapt and to help reassure those afraid of using technological devices.

8. Devising an incentive programme for employees can encourage engagement and positive use of the system. The driver who creates the fewest harsh braking or steering inputs, for example, or who has the best mpg across the year, might get an extra day's holiday, or a cash prize.

For companies measuring fuel cost savings, an initiative that sees an employee enjoy a percentage of these savings as part of their remuneration could prove highly effective.

9. Fleet management technology poses no threat to employees that are doing nothing wrong or who have nothing to hide. For these workers, vehicle tracking brings with it transparency.

Should a minority of employees be acting dishonestly to the detriment of the majority, the technology will enable management to act upon this and create a fair working environment for everyone. Set rules for infractions from the start and stick by them.



10. Adopt systems and establish processes that enable staff privacy to be respected.

If members of your workforce are driving vehicles outside of working hours, they need to know their private life is just that – private. Any system that is introduced should allow users to make journeys invisible to their employer when the system is in private mode, although mileage will still be tracked for administrative purposes.

Moreover, fleet management systems generate a wealth of data, some of which may be deemed sensitive, such as vehicle locations and individual working hours. It should only be possible to access the software systems via a secure log-in, and access should be restricted to those individuals concerned with the management of a company's fleet.

It is natural for drivers to be resistant to new systems and processes but effective change management can ensure a seamless transition. Simple, clear and transparent communication is key to successful adoption, enabling the technology to form a cornerstone of your business operations.