

PROBABLY THE BEST

**GIVEN THE TRANSPORT INDUSTRY'S PROBLEMS WITH
TELEMATICS PROJECTS THAT FAIL TO LIVE UP TO
LONGER TERM EXPECTATIONS, BRIAN TINHAM
ESTABLISHES SOME KEYS FOR SUCCESS**

"Effectively, we're no longer telling drivers how to drive better: they're telling each other"

KARL WILSHAW



Far too many telematics-based fleet fuel efficiency improvement programmes suffer one of two problems. Either it all starts well enough but after two or three years the gains plateau or, worse, start sliding back and the initiative falls into disrepute. Alternatively, the system becomes the project and it never gets off the ground. Typically, managers get bogged down in data and, again, the programme takes the blame.

Why? Well, operators that have travelled the telematics journey and admit to shortcomings will tell you it's invariably about people. For the former camp, the issue almost always concerns drivers going off the boil - with reasons ranging from too many measurement criteria to too few incentives and/or ineffective training. Even drivers' inflated views of their own competence will limit success. Meanwhile, for those overly-focused on the system, the problem



Photographs: Charlie Milligan

generally relates to managers not having the clout, budget or time either to do the analysis or engage with drivers and implement appropriate training and/or reward schemes.

One high-profile operator that has run this course and witnessed the potential pitfalls first-hand is Carlsberg. But UK fleet manager Karl Wilshaw says the firm is now winning hands down, thanks to a next-generation programme involving "reverse engineering" - with 'A' grade drivers effectively challenging their peers to do better.

Wilshaw reveals that Carlsberg first introduced Microlise telematics back in 2010, but although it initially saw rapid and impressive improvements, they didn't last. "We had a good win in 2011, but that started tailing off in 2012 and 2013, and even more so in 2014. So, although we achieved a 9.6% fuel efficiency improvement over the first four years, we were seeing diminishing returns. The danger was that beyond

2014 we might start going backwards."

He identifies two reasons for this longer term decline. On the one hand, criteria being used to measure drivers were too complex, but, on the other, Carlsberg had effectively become a victim of its own success. "Don't get me wrong. The drivers were motivated by Microlise's 'A to G' performance grading scheme - but seven parameters turned out to be too many. You're bound to see initial improvements, but after that you can't focus your driver feedback and training. But also, once you've got 'A' grade drivers, how do you convince them they can do better?"

INSPIRATIONAL APPROACH

Carlsberg's approach was inspirational. First, Wilshaw's team reduced the number of driver performance parameters from seven to just four - idling, green band driving, acceleration and harsh braking - and simplified graphical reports to make the system

more digestible for operational teams. But second, and arguably more importantly, his team singled out top-scoring 'A' grade drivers and the most proactive depots, and got them to transfer their knowledge to the rest.

"Last year, we used an external company to go out with our top drivers and interview them on camera about techniques they use to improve their eco-driving. Then we started using these films at our new internal Driver CPC sessions - effectively getting drivers' top-flight colleagues talking to them about how they're hitting the 'A' grades." Wilshaw concedes there's more to it - including using highly-motivated logistics support trainers (LSTs). He explains that, apart from the classroom-based training, each LST goes out with two drivers (three-seat cab). Part of this has been about training drivers to adapt to new Euro 6 vehicles, with their different torque curves and, in some cases, predictive cruise control.

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LUBRICATING THE PARTS...

Improving driver behaviour is not the only way to save on fuel. Other important aspects include optimising your truck drivelines, implementing effective aerodynamics (including minimising the cab gap on artics), minimising front profiles, lightweighting, tyres, alignment - and lower viscosity lubes.

Looking at the latter, Swedish haulage firm Mertz Transport is reporting fuel savings of 2% following a 10-month trial of ExxonMobil's Mobil Delvac 1 LE 5W-30 engine oil in its Mercedes-Benz Actros tractors. And French petroleum haulier Transports PFT claims 1.87% savings using the same fully synthetic oil - in its case with Euro 5 Volvo tractors on seven months of back-to-back trials.

Malmö-based Mertz, which operates a mixed fleet of 115 trucks, performed its trials on two Euro 5 new Actros trucks between December 2013 and October 2014. One was filled using Mobil Delvac XHP LE 10W-40 engine oil; the other with the lower viscosity 1 LE 5W-30. Both meet the MB 228.51 specification for low-ash engine oils.

The trucks covered the same route with the same freight. Data was recorded using their FleetBoard telematics - and managing director Stig Mertz confirms that the vehicle using the lower viscosity oil notched up the 2% fuel improvement. "We will consider switching our entire fleet to this lower viscosity synthetic lubricant and hope to benefit both from improved fuel economy and streamlined logistics and purchase benefits."

Meanwhile, Bassens, France-based Transports PFT, which operates a fleet of 18 Renault and Volvo trucks, went

for its trial following recommendations by French Péchavy Lubrifiants, a Mobil-authorized distributor. The firm replaced what it describes as a standard SAE 15W-40 engine oil with Mobil Delvac 1 LE 5W-30 in two trucks. Fuel economy performance of the two test trucks and two control vehicles - which were operated under similar road and weather conditions - was monitored using Volvo's Dynafleet telematics system.

Since the trial, Transports PFT has converted its entire truck fleet to Mobil Delvac 1 LE 5W-30, and chief executive Stéphane Fiacre says he is anticipating savings of €13,100 per year. "We are extremely happy to have followed Péchavy's advice," he says. "Fuel economy is one of our primary concerns, so the potential for savings through such a simple switchover is hugely positive for our business."

Longer drain intervals, which help to cut fleet maintenance time, have also been made possible, he adds, following monitoring of the test trucks using oil analysis.



However, it was also about reviewing telematics data behind the scenes to assess the effectiveness of their driving styles. Getting up to 'A' is then about classroom exercises and e-learning.

The prize was outstanding: indeed, the initial training day saw an average 4.5% fuel consumption improvement, albeit with limited datasets. "We're not targeting that nationally," laughs Wilshaw. "Last year we wanted a 1% improvement, which would get us back on track. In fact, even though it took from January to September to get all the depots from an average 'C' up to 'A' grade, we still recorded a 1.1% full-year

fuel efficiency improvement."

That, he says, represents a fuel saving of 71,000 litres, compared to 2014. And it's already ramping up. Figures from January 2015 to January 2016 reveal a 1.8% improvement in kpl, equating to 5,170 litres of fuel saved in January, and the associated CO₂ emissions.

And there's more. An impressive by-product has been a reduction of 14 vehicle-related incidents against the 2013-2014 benchmark - a drop of 23%. "That's huge," enthuses Wilshaw. "I expected at best 10%, because we were already in a good place. The benefits are not only reduced damage costs but

also downward pressure on our insurance premiums."

Such has been the success that Carlsberg is now rolling out its fuel efficiency blueprint throughout western Europe. Meanwhile in the UK, the telematics-based performance criteria are being revisited to keep the momentum going. "We've upped the goals slightly on our existing four measures, but we're also considering removing one and swapping it for another, probably coasting. The jury's out: we might make it five. Whatever we do, we want to standardise across Europe." And he adds that for drivers at

“When they see our film, drivers say, ‘Wow; hold on; I hadn’t thought of that’. Road craft, anticipation, etc, isn’t rocket science, but hearing it from their own colleagues unlocks doors”

Karl Wilshaw

COUNCIL OF THE WISE

Local authorities facing major budget cuts could help soften the blow by investing a little to gain a lot. One that proves the point is Gateshead Council, where fleet manager Graham Telfer looks after more than 500 vehicles - from cars and vans to 26-tonne RCVs (refuse collection vehicles). He uses a mix of technologies, including Bartec route planning, telematics, fuel monitoring, and 360-degree cameras and side scanners on his RCVs, but also low-cost driver training aids on vans up to 3.5 tonnes - always mindful of the imperative to avoid driver distraction.

“Budget cuts mean that going out and buying new vehicles because they are eco-friendly is not sustainable,” he says. “Instead we need to look into measures that will not only reduce costs, but also help protect our front line services.” And one such that is still delivering success concerns Lightfoot, currently installed on 16 of the council’s 120 vans.

Telfer says the system is impressive - proactively fixing driver behaviour at source through a mix of real-time visual and audible in-cab alerts, and coaching aimed at instantly modifying driving styles. “Lightfoot is an effective driver

training tool. All our new drivers use vehicles fitted with Lightfoot to help get their behaviour to our required level... Each vehicle has multiple users and we also switch them around to keep their efficiency levels up. Typically, a traffic warden might use the vehicle during the day followed by a security or care worker in the evening.”

As a result, he says, the vast majority of drivers stay within the council’s green zone. Those dipping below the level go back into training to help lift driving standards and cut fuel bills. As for the results, Telfer reports that in its first year, Lightfoot helped deliver fuel savings of 20%. Today, combined with measures including more fuel-efficient vehicles, Gateshead is seeing a 5% reduction in fuel, year on year. Additionally, since 2009 Gateshead has seen a 40% cut in accident rates - with 6% attributed to Lightfoot. That, he says, has not only cut tens of thousands of pounds off repair bills but also improved its vans’ residual values.

And his final point: “As a council, we simply don’t have the capacity or headcount to micro-manage data. With Lightfoot’s traffic-light report, anything in green is good, amber alerts us to an issue, and anything in red we need to address... It’s just a pity this technology is not suitable for our larger trucks.”

the top of their game, Carlsberg is in dialogue with Microlise to consider a new ‘A*’ grade.

Wilshaw’s advice is unequivocal: “Admittedly, you have to put money, time and effort in, but you will get the rewards - and not only in terms of fuel savings. Think about filming your best people: you just can’t put a price on it. How else are you going to deal with someone sitting there thinking ‘So what are you going to teach me?’. When they see our film, drivers say, ‘Wow; hold on; I hadn’t thought of that’. Road craft isn’t rocket science, but hearing it from their own colleagues unlocks doors.”

His last word: “Don’t just leave it. This kind of project is never done. You have to keep on pushing the boundaries, working with your telematics supplier.”

Meanwhile, Derek Daly, general manager for fleet at Felixstowe-based Goldstart Transport, is another firm

believer that operators embarking on telematics projects without focusing firmly on drivers are heading for a fall.

“Telematics will identify how the vehicle is being driven, but, unless you work with the drivers and get them to change their ways, your project is a non-starter,” he says. “You’ll have more drivers sitting outside HR offices waiting for performance issue interviews than driving your vehicles.”

IN THE DRIVING SEAT

Daly has been using Microlise across this operator’s 350-strong vehicle fleet for 12 months, and insists that the key to getting drivers involved is how you reward them. “We heavily incentivise drivers,” he says, explaining that he uses Microlise’s ‘A’ to ‘G’ grading system for driving style, paying drivers who achieve ‘A’, ‘B’ or ‘C’ on a sliding scale. “You can also use this system to monitor agency

drivers and you quickly weed out the poor performers,” he adds.

Beyond financial rewards, Daly agrees that, if you want worthwhile results, there is no substitute for training. “I have two driver trainers who have been manufacturer trained and can deliver the message,” he says.

However, proof of the power of incentives comes from his results. Documents seen by this journal clearly show that Goldstart’s reward scheme made a marked difference to a hitherto sliding picture. And the benefits include: increased mpg; reduced idling; accidents and accident costs down; and reduced wear and tear spend.

“If we had not had the incentive scheme in place, our results would not have been as dramatic... The danger is being swamped by reports with an inability to correct the issues because the driving force is not on-side.” **TE**