Fuel's errand

E very January, we publish an overview of the big business issues facing CV operators and provide estimates of running costs for benchmarking (p16). Below is an example of how to use them.

Last year, I learned how many vehicle OEMs have expanded their driver training provision. This in-depth training aims to help drivers get the best out of the vehicle in terms of fuel efficiency and safety. Despite the familiar cabin environment and controls, modern trucks are complicated, particularly at the heavy end. Driving style and strategy plays a massive role in their overall performance.

These one-day courses are not very expensive; some are free. And yet, OEMs tell me that they either struggle to sign up customers in the first place, or arrange training only to have the drivers cancel at the last minute, as they are bidden to cover another job on the day.

This is a conflict between short-term and long-term problems. Our tables allow us to estimate the significance of the latter, at least. And at first glance, fuel costs are a huge expense across the vehicle parc. At 38t and above (and very nearly 33t), annual fuel costs exceed the driver's entire salary. At these large scales, it stands to reason that even a small improvement can have a big effect on the bottom line. Based on the data, the value, in pounds, of a 1%, 3% and 5% improvement in fuel economy was estimated for each class of vehicle (from 7.5t up). And the average value for each of those percentiles was £314, £941 and £1,568, respectively.

How significant is that? Let's assume the average UK driver, Earl, works five days a week and receives the legal minimum of 28 days holiday (including bank holidays), earning £35,631, which is the average driver salary from 7.5t up. That's a day rate of £154.

So, in crude terms, a 1% improvement over the average fuel economy is worth two days of Earl's time. And that's just the average. At the heaviest end, where miles have increased and fuel efficiencies decreased, the benefit of 1% is nearly three times the driver day rate.

Fleet managers: can you afford for your drivers not to be trained?

Will Dalrymple
Editor

To reach shortened URLs in the magazine – *www.is.gd/xxxxxx* – type the whole link into the address window of your web browser.