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Onwards and upwards

During lockdown, many businesses had to reassess their operations. They may have had to change the way that they did things to carry on trading. They may put staff on government-funded furlough.

But the last stages of lockdown are winding down. Now, less than eight weeks remain of the furlough scheme, of which the government's financial contribution has already begun to tail off. Schools reopenings in Scotland and Northern Ireland last month, and in England and Wales this month, are another big step toward moving on.

The business landscape that operators now find themselves is much altered from when lockdown began; the economy is now heavily in recession. That means that competition could increase if, as is often the case, work starts to dry up.

For added protection in the post-COVID-19 world, operators should look to carry on that lockdown corporate introspection to include raising internal standards. For example, the independent irtec certification scheme for vehicle technicians, irtec tyre and irtec workshop accreditation, verify that engineering staff are going about maintenance the proper way. Although not required by law, irtec qualifications are strongly recommended by DVSA in the latest version of its Guide to Vehicle Roadworthiness (www.is.gd/nofine).

Apart from offering competitive advantage, efforts to improve the way that maintenance is carried out (and the way that drivers are managed) can offer other real benefits. For example, as ATFs reopen, they won't be able to catch up with the backlog of truck tests from lockdown, as well as current demand. To generate extra capacity, DVSA announced last month that operators deemed to be safest - members of Earned Recognition, and which had high OCRS scores - will essentially be able to skip this year's annual test requirement (see p34 for details).

This example suggests that, having made it through lockdown, operators now need to raise their game to stand out from the crowd.

Will Dalrymple
Editor

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