

Can vehicle fleet managers and the transport industry learn from our cousins on the other side of the pond, when it comes to operations and management?

Certainly Carl Kirk, vice president of maintenance, information technology and logistics of the American Trucking Association (ATA), believes so. Kirk argues that commercial vehicle operations are more professional in America, compared with Europe, but is he right?

In the US, he says, the truck operator has been educated to keep precise cost and reliability data, not only of the vehicle systems, but also the individual truck parts. The details are made available through the use of the ATA's "very specific and standardised vehicle maintenance reporting systems".

Upon analysis of the data, there is a realisation, says Kirk, of which systems, components or parts work best together on a specific operation. As a result, the operator tells the OEM (original equipment manufacturer) exactly which components are required.

In Europe, Kirk believes, the vehicle manufacturers tell the operator what he should buy, with very little reference to the company's type of business or, in some cases, its replacement policy.

He will have the chance to argue his case, and also find out more about European operations, when he makes an appearance at the UK Road Transport Industry mock trial at the end of this month.

However, the knowledge-gathering possibilities could work both ways. For example, disc brakes and aerodynamic technology are two areas where the US would welcome European expertise and experience, according to Kirk.

If you feel you have something to offer, then Derby University is the place to be on 28 June.



Transport Engineer's regular 'IRTE to IRTE' members' column: focusing on the issues, challenges and concerns that matter to transport engineers and fleet managers