

In an era that demands maximum vehicle uptime and efficiency, but also minimised spending, what is the true cost of conformance?

Operators claim to insist on the highest quality of maintenance in support of their Operator Licence statements. But while they demand premium standards, they seem less inclined to pay for the additional investment in training and sophisticated equipment that a reputable service provider is inevitably bound to incur.

As a result, in practice we still see far too much of the 'man and a van', who inspects vehicles and trailers in all conditions. Or perhaps I should say: fills in forms in all conditions to address the stated inspection periods.

When faced with customers suffering ever-decreasing margins and arguably unfair competition, even some respectable service providers will have a problem. High-tech equipment, the associated training through irtec and the subsequent service provider registration all cost money, which has to be passed on in charges somewhere.

So how, as an industry, can we realistically improve on existing vehicle maintenance processes? The answer may lie in extended inspection periods with quality inspections, rather than the notorious form-filling exercise. Vehicle technology has made massive strides forward over the past 10 to 15 years and yet we still have four-, six- and eight-weekly inspections.

A combination of diligent Driver First Use Checks and timely quality inspections can deliver the benefits required by all parties. VOSA (the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency) and the vehicle manufacturers would, I am sure, be open to this type of discussion – provided it is proved to be responsible and not just a cost-cutting exercise.

Driver First Use Checks carry an increasing responsibility when it comes to vehicle maintenance, and they are in the hands of the operator. There is still a place for mobile technicians with the correct equipment, but they should have the authority to recognise when conditions are not suitable to complete a satisfactory repair.

If such measures were considered, there could be major benefits for all concerned with vehicle maintenance for the future.



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