

CHOOSING THE RIGHT SUPPLIER

Advice from fleet decision-makers on best value relationships, while leading suppliers reveal their latest products and services



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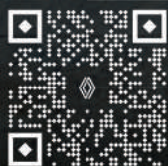
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WELCOME

Supply chain management is a vital skillset for every fleet decision-maker. All businesses rely on their supplier relationships – ensuring the right partners are selected is fundamental to maximising your efficiencies.

This *Fleet News* guide to Choosing the Right Supplier is packed with useful advice from fleet operators about the processes they go through when looking for business partners. In addition to providing a holistic overview of the questions and approaches you should employ when tendering, we also cast the spotlight on several major topics, including accident management, alternative fuels, electric vehicle charging, fleet management, leasing, racking, remarketing, rental and telematics.

To foster, and then make the most of, these valuable and vital partnerships requires the investment of time and effort. Preparation is everything. Be methodical and dispassionate in your approach and your company will go through a productive process that will elicit the right provider or providers to help fund and run the fleet.

Choose partners who you can challenge – and who will challenge you – to continually innovate. Steer away from the status quo; you want your suppliers to come up with new ways of doing things that will improve your operational effectiveness.



Stephen Briers,
group editor,
Fleet News

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REDUCING THE STRESS OF CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

Drawing up proper guidance and efficiently managing the selection can pay long-term dividends

Modern fleet decision-makers are as much supply chain managers as they are fleet managers.

Whether you outsource your fleet to a third-party provider or run everything in-house, you will still have myriad relationships that require negotiating, setting up and managing. These range from the vehicles on your choice list to the fleet management software and telematics that ensure you run an efficient, low-cost operation.

These supplier relationships should be valuable and vital partnerships, a crucial part of the daily running of the business and, like any good relationship, it needs the investment of time and effort.

Preparation is everything. Approach such partnerships methodically and dispassionately and your company will go through a productive process that will elicit the right provider or providers to help fund and run the fleet.

First and foremost, says Paul Hollick, chair of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) fleets should "work out why they need vehicles in the business and then the method of funding they want".

All tenders should follow the same basic outline. Start by identifying what you want from the relationship.

The next move should be to look at internal policies to see which ones need to be applied to the tender: ethical purchasing, environment, sustainability, health and safety, values and behaviour will all need to be included. A cultural fit is crucial.

Fleets which already know what is available in the market do not need to do a request for information (RFI), but if they want to test the temperature of the water, sending out an RFI to a broad selection of companies will give a clear picture of what the industry is doing.

Those already well versed can skip to the next phase: a pre-

qualification questionnaire (PQQ).

These generally cover considerations such as finance, quality, equal opportunities and health and safety, but can include any areas of specific interest to a company.

Having narrowed down the number of bidders, the next document has to provide a clear picture of the constitution of the fleet.

This includes vehicle specification, use cases, the renewal profile and any challenges and opportunities you would like to explore. In addition, explain what services and products you need from the recipients and how you will weight the answers.

It is essential to keep this

document simple, unambiguous and to ask only questions that need answering. If 'nice to have' items are included, they will be priced into suppliers' responses, although it will also identify suppliers willing to add value with free-of-charge services. It is a balance between being concise and informative.

There is a tendency to make bid documents too complicated, which will cause some companies to decline to participate and others not to complete them properly.

Fleet managers should not be tempted to re-hash old tender documents: it is likely their business has moved on from the conditions

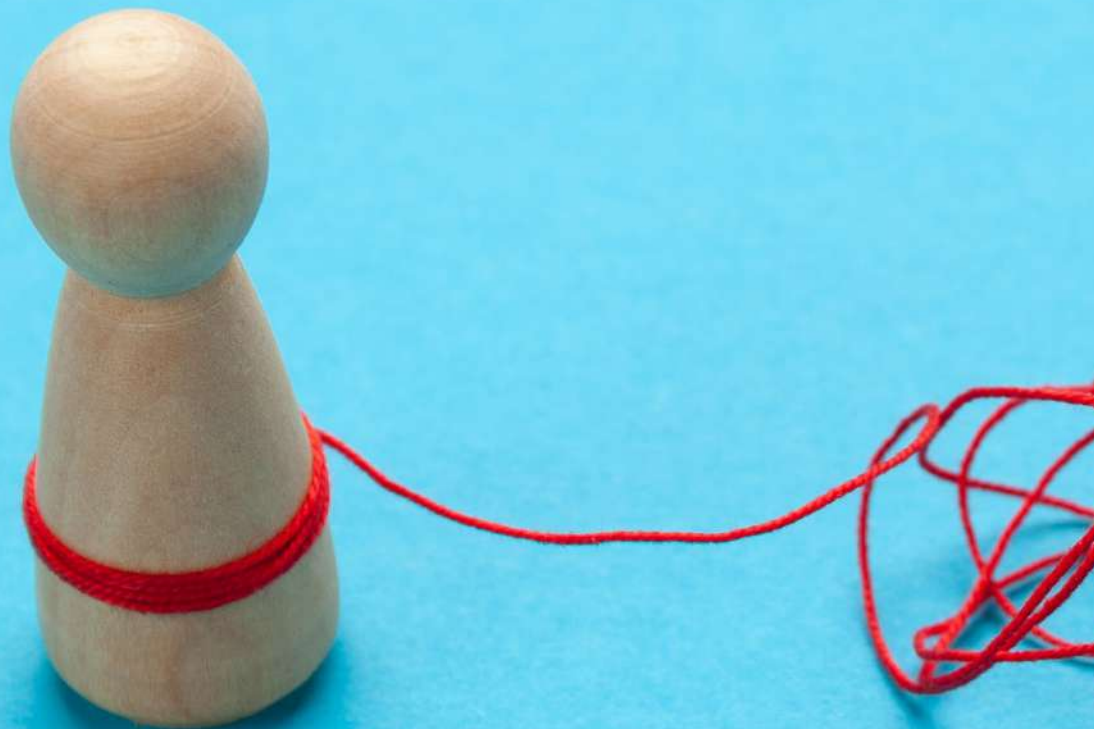
that drove it five years previously.

Fleets should word tenders in a way to elicit useful answers. Ask valid questions when you are going to differentiate potential suppliers on the basis of the answer.

Misunderstandings are quite common, so fleet managers should spell out what they expect from their potential supplier and provide a clear statement of works.

Procurement is playing an increasing role in the tender process, particularly for the big-ticket items such as leasing contracts. It has improved the quality of the documents sent out.

But there is a downside.



10 STEPS TO A SMOOTH AND RISK-FREE PROCUREMENT PROCESS.

1 KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Do you need to go through a tender process? If the service you require is very specific or you only have a few vehicles, you could contact suppliers directly. However, the thought process before you start must be the same either way; knowing what you want is crucial.

2 QUESTION COLLEAGUES

Start by examining your current provision. Speak to key stakeholders – such as other directors and staff – to identify what is important. Taking a collaborative approach means you can utilise the skills and expertise from across your business.

3 DRAW UP A PRIORITY LIST

Everything on your wish list will come with a cost, and not just financially. If time is critical, broaden the definition of vehicle you will accept. If product is critical, then longer lead times may be needed.

Think what you are willing to pay for each element.

4 PUT VALUE BEFORE PRICE

If price is the most important element for you, say so upfront; but usually it's best value rather than price alone that matters. Any supplier needs to be competitive on price, but this should not sacrifice quality or value provided. Assess service levels, value for money, innovative ideas and expertise when deciding if a supplier is suitable. Any tender should tease out cost and service information to allow the best decision for the company and its drivers.

5 DON'T FALL FOR FREEBIES

Look at the whole package and not just the free extras. These may save some money, but your company will save a lot more if you focus on ensuring the structure is right in the first place.

6 RESEARCH THE MARKET

Make sure you are aware of all the key companies in the marketplace. Ask for testimonials from those you decide to select for the tender process – and ensure you follow them up. Check their financial security – you need suppliers that have a strong balance

sheet. Talk to other fleets about the lessons they have learned while tendering. Also, seek advice from leasing/fleet management companies about structuring the tender.

7 WATCH LATEST TECHNOLOGY

If you need a supplier that can offer continual improvement or contract enhancement as technologies change, say so. You need a supplier that understands the latest market developments, including the emergence of new technology.

8 FIND SOMEONE YOU TRUST

Meet face to face – even before the suppliers have put in their tenders. This is the first step in a relationship – make sure you shake hands with someone you like, can trust and can work with. Ask whether their business culture fits with your own ideologies.

9 LOOK BEYOND THE FIGURES

Identify those elements which are not vehicle-related such as corporate social responsibility, company ethos, a supplier's financial stability and reporting capabilities. Be clear about the type of company you want to work with.

10 PRIORITISE

Accept that everything on your wish list will come with a cost and prioritise accordingly.



Procurement-led tenders may not consult widely enough with internal stakeholders such as finance, fleet managers and HR. As a result, they can restrict quotations to contract hire only, for example, when an alternative arrangement may be a better fit, and then they miss opportunities.

Scoring and weighting can often be a thorny issue, particularly when companies overstate the bias on pricing instead of value and service.

Clearly, when it comes to products such as telematics, trials offer the best way to identify which is best suited to your needs. However, this should only occur once you have been through the process to identify

and shortlist potential suppliers based on the steps outlined above.

Leasing is more complex as the supplier will be far more integrated into the working fabric of the fleet.

A relationship with a leasing company is a partnership and a low price does not necessarily mean good value. It is worth asking about sustainability of pricing to ensure that a low price does not creep up over the course of the contract.

An overly prescriptive tender document does not give suppliers the opportunity to demonstrate added value, their full range of capabilities, innovation or thought leadership.

Presentations should be included as part of the process and can be revealing, says Bauer Media group fleet/risk manager Debbie Floyd.

During a previous tender, one leasing company arrived with five people from chief executive to account manager and "gave a professional presentation, as we would expect", says Floyd.

However, another company sent two people who had not been part of the tender process and one of them focused on commercial vehicles; Bauer's fleet is predominantly car.

"They had not read the brief – which doesn't give you any confidence," she says.

Realistic timescales are also important when it comes to the major tenders, such as leasing.

Setting unrealistic deadlines means the quality of the submission is less than the process deserves.

Once you have settled on your partner, it is important to ensure that everything you negotiated has been put into the contract.

Hollick offers a final piece of advice. "The most important factor is to treat your supplier as a partner," he says. "You want to get the most receptive, most sustainable partner you possibly can, who will work with you in the long term to help shape your business."

MAINTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP

Fleets that behave like world-class customers are more likely to receive world-class service from their suppliers

By Stephen Briers

You've been through an exhaustive tendering process, picking through piles of documents and carrying out interviews, and have now granted the contract to the successful supplier. Job done, yes?

Actually, no. The job has just begun.

The strength of partnerships between fleets and their suppliers is paramount to a successful operation.

If traditional purchasing was driven by a focus on cutting costs and boosting short-term profits, today's strategic procurement is shifting the emphasis from transaction to relationship, concentrating on securing long-term value.

It's a development that is forcing fleet decision-makers to decide which products and services can be treated as 'widgets' and bought for the cheapest price and which are so mission-critical that the quality of service makes a material difference to their operations – resulting in regular service level agreement meetings and key indicators to monitor performance.

However, customer honesty is crucial – and often underappreciated – to receiving high levels of service.

In an academic paper, Professor Lynette Ryals from Cranfield University, identified 'supplier delusion', in which providers have a much higher opinion of the quality of their relationship with a client than the client does.

The reason? Customers tend to give overly-flattering reports about their suppliers. And they often switch them without any warning about under-performance, giving the incumbent no opportunity to address concerns.

Indeed, Ryals notes that "customer loyalty is only 75% even at the highest levels of satisfaction".

She suggests that customers are much more likely to receive world-class service if they behave like world-class customers.

The Chartered Institute of Procure-

ment & Supply (CIPS) says building a trusted relationship with suppliers is a critical skill for procurement and supply chain specialists, one that needs nurturing – and it has to work both ways.

Performance reviews and regular meetings will keep the conversation flowing, but it is important that fleets do not beat up suppliers on price.

Nailing a supplier down on price, for example, may reduce the scope for flexibility further down the line if circumstances change. As the pandemic has illustrated, flexibility in extending contracts, delaying new orders and even suspending payments can be extremely useful.

"It stores up problems further down the line," says CIPS.

Honest conversations

Good communication extends from honest day-to-day conversations between operational fleet teams and their supplier counterparts to strategic review meetings, but it also encompasses candid "off the record" discussions between fleet chiefs and their opposite numbers at providers to iron out problems that risk escalating into more serious issues.

If fleets have to resort to the terms and conditions of a contract to get what they want, the relationship is probably doomed beyond recovery.

Business relationships that have survived the constraints and pressures of the pandemic will have been built on solid foundations. CIPS recommends developing supply agreements jointly, with transparency a priority as both sides disclose their issues and challenges.

Innovation should be included as a key specification with partners expected to provide evidence of where they have added value to elevate their product or service above those of competitors.

Delivering the basic terms of an agreement is not sufficient to retain business, particularly with larger

corporates and those with professional fleet managers.

Abandoning adversarial relationships, decision-makers at larger fleets are keenly aware of how the performance of a supplier can reflect on their own departments.

Stewart Lightbody, deputy chairman of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP), says: "I want to work with suppliers who understand me and what my organisation is trying to achieve and who buy into the same thing. Some of my best and longest relationships I have seen as extensions to my own team because what they do can impact directly and indirectly on how my internal customers see me and my team's performance."

An open, trust-built relationship allows a fleet to share its objectives and disclose its budgetary constraints, so both parties can work together on affordable solutions.

In return, it requires the fleet to understand the provider's business, how they want to operate, what schemes and mechanisms they use, and how they make their money.

This involves treating cost and value as two separate entities in the decision-making process and attributing a similar weight to both.

Inevitably, there are in-contract incidents where the strength of the relationship gets tested. A vehicle recall, for example, could see an entire batch of vehicles grounded, at which point a supportive manufacturer would step up and provide temporary replacement vehicles while they deal with the issue.

It is also vital to build relationships with businesses that align comfortably with a company's own strategic corporate aims in areas such as sustainability, diversity, equality and inclusion.

Having supplier partners that share your company's brand values will help both organisations achieve their business goals with a long-term relationship.



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AN EIGHT-POINT PLAN TO BETTER SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS

The Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS) explains how to build and maintain a successful partnership between fleet and supplier:

1 Pre-contract – meet up and visit a supplier's premises and develop the agreement together, honestly and with transparency in mind, where both sides share their issues and challenges too.

2 Establish a clear commitment from both parties on what is expected from each side at the start of the relationship to avoid future misunderstandings. Draw up a clear, concise and realistic contract.

3 Organisations seeking differentiation in the market will want to look for true value across the supply chain, not just cost. Beating down suppliers on price is not ethical or responsible procurement and stores up problems further down the line.

4 Maintain regular contact: face-to-face communication, regular site visits and frequent performance reviews will keep conversation flowing.

5 Keep reviewing service levels on a regular basis.

6 Share data – it's an important aspect of transparency and supporting each other.

7 Work collaboratively – have open discussions about where savings could be made without compromising on quality or other important aspects of the partnership.

8 Try to understand each other so well that one side can predict how the other will react to a particular challenge, creating a symbiotic relationship.

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WHO YOU GONNA CALL? STRESS-BUSTERS!

When collisions occur, the support of a skilled accident management company can make a substantial difference to resolving claims

By Jonathan Manning

In the troubling aftermath of a collision, an accident management company can resemble a white knight, communicating with drivers and third parties, notifying fleets and insurers and starting a sequence of events that reduce the stress and limit the cost of the claim.

Supplier websites suggest that every accident management company delivers a full range of services, so the challenge is to find a partner with expertise in those areas of the crash-to-claims process that really makes a difference to individual fleet requirements.

Courtney Brennan, fleet claims manager, Speedy Services, says: "The main thing for us was having a robust claims line, so if a driver has an accident their call gets answered quickly."

This is critical for fleets whose drivers work outside standard office hours, with some accident management companies only operating

phone lines during the nine-to-five, before handing over to a third party for out-of-hours calls. A subcontractor's knowledge of the fleet, the information it wants to capture, and its notification procedures may not be as comprehensive as those of the accident management company.

A time limit for the first notification of loss (FNOL) formed part of Speedy's tender for accident management. The company sets a 60-minute deadline after a driver reports a collision, the so-called golden hour, for its supplier to take control of the incident and, if the driver is at fault, provide a replacement car to the third party and book their vehicle in for repair. This can reassure the third party and avoid significant credit hire costs.

Forward-facing cameras

With an increasing number of fleet vehicles now featuring forward-facing cameras, accident management companies have the opportunity to review video and establish

fault within minutes of a collision.

"The next step is to book our vehicle in for repair. So, we need to ensure that the accident management company has a wide network of repairers up and down the country, especially in the areas where we operate," says Brennan.

For mixed fleets, it's also important that these repairers can fix the widest range of vehicles, says Stewart Lightbody, fleet management lead, Severn Trent, gazing out of his window at a 44-tonne tractor-trailer combination.

"You might find a workshop doesn't have enough room – the vehicle is too high or too long – so it's vital to know your fleet's extremes," he says.

"Accident management is not just a service, it needs to be aligned to the complexities of your fleet and operation."

Naturally, not all collisions are the fault of a fleet, so accident management companies also need to provide uninsured loss recovery (ULR), to recoup repair costs and replacement

vehicle fees from the third party, especially costs that fall below a policy excess where an insurer would get involved.

Minimising repair times is also an important accident management function, although Brennan says a dose of realism is required for setting vehicle-off-road (VOR) targets, given the wildly different levels of damage that a vehicle might suffer, as well as the availability of replacement parts in today's supply chain crisis.

Valuable insights

Finally, the analysis of claims data can provide valuable insights into the areas where fleets face most risk, allowing for targeted solutions.

A rash of broken wing mirrors might prompt a depot redesign, backing into stationary objects could lead to reversing cameras, and rear-end shunts could prompt a review of driver distraction policies.

"We get a data pack through every month that categorises types of accident, so we can put processes in place to understand why they are happening, and introduce training to avoid them," says Brennan.

It's all about the journey for the UK's No1 incident management partner of choice

Take one ambitious, family-run start-up in 1986, operating from a humble first floor office with a workforce of just three, and turn it into a 700+ colleague strong, multi-million-pound FTSE250 business within Redde Northgate plc.

FMG's story is one of success, centred around nearly four decades of organic growth, bold innovations, rock-solid partnerships and an unwavering commitment to customer service excellence.

Those modest early premises were quickly out-grown and the following decade saw FMG respond swiftly to market challenges, seizing opportunities and launching forward-thinking innovations. Their agility attracted the UK's leasing giants and blue-chip fleets, roadside recovery contracts with multiple police forces and National Highways.

Another new decade brought further evolution with the business making a bold move into claims management. Their reputation preceded them, and an early relationship with a major global brand only attracted further interest. More substantial growth ensued, partnering with a number of major UK insurers and brokers over the course of the decade.

Today, 'home' is 43,500 sq ft of premium office space that far better represents FMG's size, stature and volume along with the energetic, passionate, customer-centric culture within. Its history is rich, its reputation, richer.

But how did this 36-year-old business become the leading provider of incident management to the fleet sector, working with 17 of the top 25 FN50 leasing companies? We sat down with Dave Parry, Commercial Director at FMG to understand the key to its success.

"FMG brings a refreshing simplicity to the world of incident management, with a wholly configurable one-stop-shop model that delivers seamless solutions," he says.

FMG can manage the entire incident life cycle or any element within it, including vehicle repair and recovery through to replacement vehicles, third party intervention and legal services. And their USP can be summarised in three words: People. Flexibility. Innovation.

"We take time to understand what customers really need and then combine and configure any or all of our services on a modular basis as they're designed to bend and flex to meet each customer's specific requirements."

FMG operates with tried and tested operational models, with each aspect of the claims journey honed and streamlined in collaboration with fleet managers, drivers and leasing providers. When incidents occur, FMG's in-house claims handlers provide practical and emotional support for drivers 24/7/365, noon or midnight. There is no distinction with the same service fulfilled irrelevant of time of day.

"We know our customers need someone to take control and put things right, quickly. That first call is the key moment of truth – get it right at the front-end and everything else falls into place."

Within minutes of an incident report, simultaneous actions are triggered, setting off workflows that will drive the claim forwards. If vehicle recovery is required, it's on its way to the scene. If the vehicle is deemed to be repairable, it will be booked in at an FMG Repair Services bodyshop or with a repairer from FMG's UK-wide network of more than 400 audited independents. Downtime is minimised with a full menu of repair

options including EV, and FMG's 23-strong in-house engineering team acts on behalf of customers, independently assessing every repair and applying a 'repair rather than replace' strategy and a number of alternative parts solutions.

Getting drivers back in control of their day is essential, and FMG's mobility solutions span all vehicle types to meet client requirements – car, van, EV, they'll source the relevant replacement at the relevant time. And when their customer is the at-fault party, FMG proactively and ethically defends customers losses too.

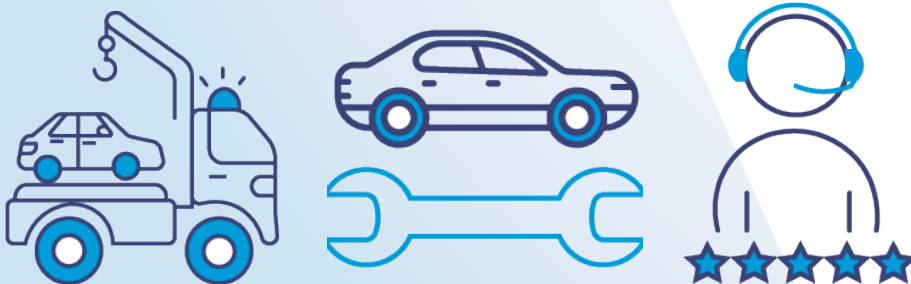
"For fleet managers, the simplicity of FMG's claims journey removes the frustration of dealing with multiple suppliers using different technology platforms which is often the root cause of delay, cost slippage and a protracted claims lifecycle in an already challenged market. It also promises a level of scalability that settles any future-proofing issues."

With 724 employees, FMG is always on hand for customers whenever they require assistance, advice or support. Handling circa 80,000 calls per month, its robust contact centre strategy is paramount for the provision of a resilient service.

Through daily MI, the business can consistently predict, plan and resource for peak times and customer behaviour in making contact. 'Moments that matter' look different in post-pandemic industry, with changes in a fleet vehicle usage, the business responded by adapting its model to continue to best support operational fulfilment.

"Our operation has adapted to reflect the change in our customers' work patterns and the different manner in which they use their cars post-pandemic."

Technology is only as good as the people who drive it. And people are a real jewel in the crown at FMG. They invest heavily in knowledge and expertise from day one, with a robust 10-week training programme for new recruits, involving a mix of classroom-based learning and 'Grad Bay' training where dedicated coaches and mentors provide constant support with technical knowledge. Building outstanding customer service skills is the single most important focus, and it shows, with the business boasting consistently high client retention





stats with many customer and supplier relationships spanning the decades.

Innovation has been key to FMG's success over the past 36 years and the business position this alongside their role in the sector – the responsibility to not only mitigate claim cost and downtime, but also to mitigate road risk. This continued focus on prioritising driver safety saw the recent launch of an enhanced risk solution designed to mitigate fleet risk and reduce incidents. FMG Indicate, an intuitive risk management portal, provides a clear picture of the level of risk within a fleet and offers a range of tailored solutions to mitigate.

Future innovations in the claims lifecycle will be driven through a five-year digital roadmap which is currently being navigated and will include the introduction of new and innovative ways to offer customers choice and ease of access in communication.

A self-serve multi-channel communication platform providing greater access to all fleet management services, is on the cusp. 'FMG Connect' will change the way customers communicate with FMG, requesting or providing data and vehicle images, booking their repair date or arranging a replacement vehicle and much more, all through an interactive interface, at a time that suits them. Currently on trial with a handful of customers, the platform is due

"We understand that an effective customer experience is about focusing on the entire customer journey and knowing where technology will deliver the best value"

for release later this year.

"FMG Connect is a key component of our digital roadmap, but the telephone remains an option too. Some customers prefer to speak to a real person for that extra level of reassurance, and we'll continue to listen and engage in precisely the way they choose."

The next step on FMG's digital journey is to offer an electronic notification tool that's fully integrated into its back-office system, offering drivers options in how they wish to report their claim. Due for launch late 2023, FMG's ENOL will offer choice, flexibility and speed via a fleet-specific QR code, delivering that next layer in customer preference to meet ever-evolving expectations.

"We understand that an effective customer experience is about focusing on

the entire customer journey and knowing where technology will deliver the best value, recognising where people will, and understanding customer preferences. We're taking time to craft our ENOL solution carefully and deliberately, to ensure consistency of service across all of our channels, and to strike the right balance between driving more routine claims through automated systems and maintaining human contact in the moments that matter most to our customers."

The industry moves fast, and this business does too! It has been running at pace since the '80s with no sign of slowing down. Even the pandemic that left few businesses unscathed, was navigated with precision. The macro-challenges left in the aftermath have driven deeper agility – changes to process, finding workable solutions to hurdles, linking with trusted partners and thinking creatively allowing their continued commitment to philosophy – 'take control and put things right, quickly'.

The 'quickly' part is more difficult to control right now, reflective of the challenging times the industry is contending with, namely around parts supply, skills shortage and courtesy vehicles.

But 'trusted partner' was coined by this business, they can, and they will – because leading the way is all it knows.

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FMG
THINKING AHEAD

FUTURE FUELS? BATTERIES WON'T HAVE MONOPOLY

Refuelling infrastructure and the eco credentials of the fuel are vital in assessing alternative routes to shrink a fleet's carbon footprint

By Jonathan Manning

Decarbonisation may be a universal fleet objective, but this does not automatically mean electrification provides the universal answer.

Battery power seems to be winning the race to be the future powertrain of choice, but there is no shortage of fleet applications for which the current range and payload of electric vehicles (EVs) are insufficient to provide like-for-like replacements for diesel models, especially in the light and heavy commercial vehicle sectors.

This has left the door ajar for alternative technologies to reduce carbon emissions, especially for fleets prepared to conduct a deep dive into the competing environmental credentials of batteries, fuel cells, hydrogen, hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) and compressed natural gas (CNG).

"Three or four years ago there was a general sense that for the bigger vehicles on your fleet, 3.5 tonnes-plus, batteries would not be able to cope, and that hydrogen and CNG would be the answer, but technology is changing fast and there are now very large electric vehicles," says Dale Eynon, director, Defra Group Fleet Services.

"We all need to review constantly where technology is at and where it's heading."

He sees no silver bullet solution to decarbonisation, referencing the eco concerns surrounding EV battery manufacture, "but my understanding from what we read and research is that the production of batteries is getting greener all the time".

Yet even green fleets have to ensure the electricity used to charge their

EVs comes from renewable sources. Last year, 40.8% of the UK's electricity came from fossil fuels and 41.4% from renewables, so choosing energy suppliers and charge point networks committed to renewables is vital for fleets to achieve net zero objectives.

As an alternative, only green hydrogen generated from water via renewable energy is considered to be a truly net carbon-zero fuel.

Hydrogen can be used either to power fuel cells or as a direct injection fuel into a combustion engine, but any fleet relying on the gas has to be sure of convenient and long-term supply.

There are no more than 15 hydrogen stations nationwide, which means most fleets will have to rely either on bottled hydrogen or on-site generation.

"We are looking into whether some

bigger depots, where we have a lot of vehicles stored overnight, could produce green hydrogen, using our own solar or wind energy," says Eynon.

These mini power stations are still expensive, but small-scale hydrogen manufacturing units that might be able to generate enough gas to fuel five or 10 vehicles would provide a sustainable solution, he adds.

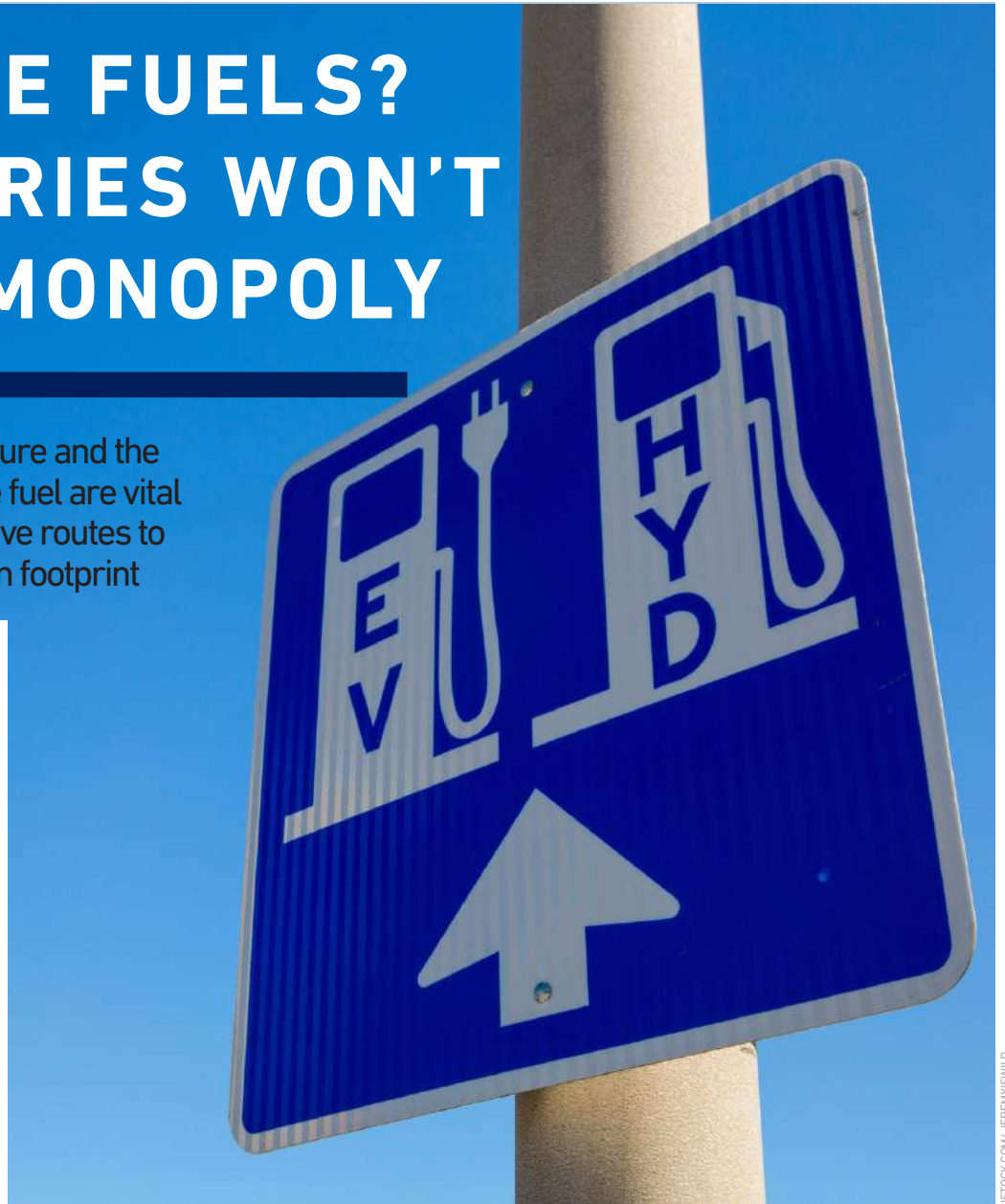
And then there are stepping-stone solutions, such as HVO and CNG, that still produce carbon emissions, albeit at a much lower level than diesel.

Again, source and supply are critical issues for green fleets – methane (CNG) captured from food waste and cattle slurry, for example, avoids the escape of a greenhouse gas several times more damaging to the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, but ensuring access to consistent supply is vital for heavy duty vehicle fleets using it as fuel.

Likewise, HVO promises lower carbon emissions, with reduction estimates ranging from 30% to 90%, dependent on research and philosophy. Is used cooking oil actually net zero because it has already been used, and how should fleets account for any palm oil added to HVO as a feedstock, given the damage to ecosystems created by landscape destruction to plant palm trees? Again, ensuring supply is vital for fleets, with bunkering a likely answer.

"We were sceptical that you could put HVO into any Euro 6 diesel engine and it would run, so we did some trials and experienced no issues," says Peter Kelly, group compliance and fleet manager at Elis.

"So, we are going through the process of putting bulk tanks into different locations so we have access to HVO for more than 70% of our fleet."



ISTOCK.COM/JEREMYWILD

Removing the headache of EV grid connections

When electricity demand in workplace car parks and depots outstrips maximum available capacity, fleets have no option but to embark on a complex – and costly – power upgrade

The ocean of acronyms through which any fleet has to swim when installing electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure provides copious evidence of the complexity of the investment.

Deciphering the alphabet soup of DNO, IDNO, MOp and ICP is the easy part; the challenge lies in managing each link in the chain to ensure the swift, cost-effective installation of workplace and depot chargers.

It's an infrastructure journey with the potential for lengthy delays and substantial cost overruns, given the administrative processes and number of suppliers, some of them heavily regulated.

The alternative is to engage the support of an expert experienced in navigating these processes, said Ian Scrowston, Commercial Deployment Director, bp pulse.

"Working with a partner to manage the project and maintain constant dialogue with all the parties can remove the headache associated with EV charging infrastructure," he said.

As a first step, bp pulse works with a customer to gain an understanding of its fleet and operation.

By knowing how many vehicles operate from a site and their duty cycle, bp pulse can calculate the power they will need, and establish the optimum charging infrastructure required.

"Then, as a deployment team, we design that infrastructure, assess their existing power supply, and engage with a DNO (Distribution Network Operator) or IDNO (independent) to secure the extra capacity required for the most cost-effective price," said Scrowston.

While some work can only be carried out by a DNO, a highly regulated body with statutory obligations and a monopoly within its geographic area, other work can be done by one of the UK's IDNOs. These operate nationally, compete with each other on price, service and quality,



"The bp pulse name means all warranties are cast iron, all compliance issues are watertight, and the quality standards are at the highest level"

Ian Scrowston, Commercial Deployment Director, bp pulse

and therefore tend to be more flexible, cheaper and more responsive.

"IDNOs are open to traditional B2B contracting relationships, so we can set bespoke contracts and incentivise them," said Scrowston.

Importantly, IDNOs are accustomed to working with DNOs, and are therefore in an ideal position to liaise with the DNO

for the connection into the DNO network. Moreover, armed with detailed forecasts of a fleet's future electricity demand, an IDNO will typically make a contribution towards the capital costs of the upgrade.

"This can deliver significant savings in the cost of the new infrastructure," said Scrowston.

At this stage of the process, BPP or the IDNO can contract an Independent Connections Provider (ICP), which has to be Lloyds Register-approved, to build the connection from the existing grid to the customer's supply position.

At the same time, the fleet's electricity supplier will engage a Meter Operator (MOp) to fit, operate and maintain the meter that measures the power consumption at the site.

"We are finding that, in a lot of cases, the most cost-effective solution is to have a separate power supply for EV charging. This not only has a cost advantage, but also means we don't have to shut down a site while we do the work, because it's an isolated supply to the property," said Scrowston.

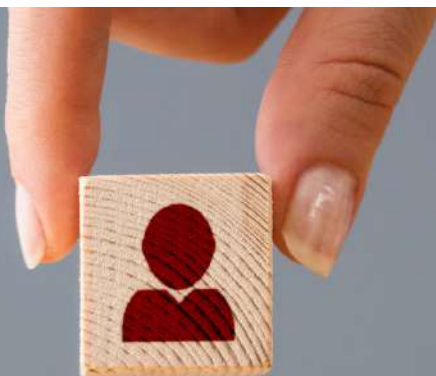
Overseeing this entire process, bp pulse can provide a complete turnkey solution, understanding a fleet's charging requirements, designing the solution, securing quotes from competing IDNOs to deliver the infrastructure required, and managing the entire project.

"Once the infrastructure is installed, we operate the chargers – they sit on our back office system – and we can manage their maintenance, too. The bp pulse name means all warranties are cast iron, all compliance issues are watertight, and the quality standards are at the highest level," said Scrowston.

"We offer certainty that a project will be delivered to a certain standard and that we will deal with any problems that arise, managing the project for the client and minimising the pain of the process for that client."

For more information visit: www.bppulse.co.uk
or email: salesdesk@bp.com





SWOT ANALYSIS CAN HELP IDENTIFY A WINNING TEAM

Fleet management is a service, not a commodity, so be sure of your needs and find a partner, not just a provider

By Jonathan Manning

In recent years, the value of selecting the right fleet management supplier has grown in tandem with the rising number of fleets that are considering unbundling service, maintenance and repair (SMR) from lease contracts as a cost-saving measure. Moving to pay-as-you-go SMR comes with the risk of a deluge of paperwork and a loss of control unless the right systems and partner are in place to help manage the process.

But, with every business operating a fleet profile and policy unique to its own requirements, choosing a fleet management company that can offer more than a vanilla solution to serve a business's operational needs is imperative.

Plus, for any fleet with an

O-licence, a supplier should be up to date with all aspects of compliance. "You need to drill down to a certain level of detail to ensure you get the level of service you require," said Stewart Lightbody, fleet management lead, Severn Trent.

"For example, do you go with a vehicle manufacturer's scheduled maintenance? Here, we would mandate minimum six-month inspections."

Similar variations can appear in several areas, including tyres. Should the fleet management company replace tyres at 2mm, 2.5mm or 3mm?

And what is its approach to replacing rubber on a like-for-like basis, sticking with premium tyres rather than cheaper options?

Without drilling into the details, fleet decision-makers could find that the savings promised by a management company do not match up to its own policies.

"If you want to get an accurate forecast of costs, you need to be very specific in what you want the fleet management company to do. You might find they can save you thousands, but only because you

are going twice as long between vehicle inspections," says Lightbody.

He encourages fleet operators to speak to peers about their experiences of dealing with different suppliers, identifying their real-world strengths and weaknesses.

Some, for example, might be excellent on the phone and in the field, but weaker on reporting, while others might excel in the richness of their data sets.

"The person selling is rarely the person you will be dealing with, so when we go out to tender, I always ask whom I will be dealing with," says Lightbody.

"Responses to a tender will typically set out the structures and say you will have an allotted account director and account manager, which sounds great, but who are they?"

"I always want another level of detail, because I expect anyone bidding for my business to have thought about what happens if they win this business and how is it going to work.

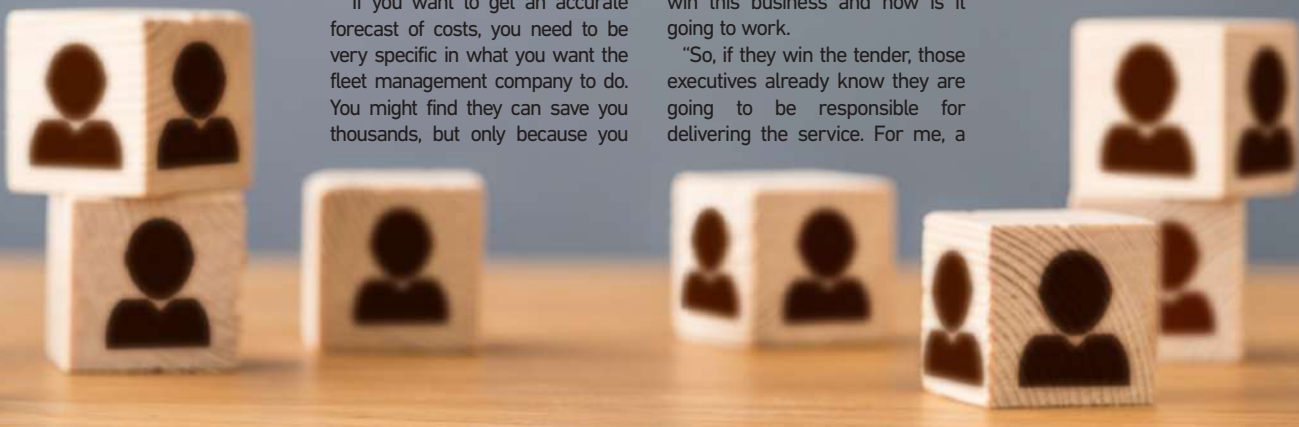
"So, if they win the tender, those executives already know they are going to be responsible for delivering the service. For me, a

good answer is 'we know who you are and how you operate, we have got an account director who looks after other utility fleets and their name is X and your account handler is going to be Y who has years of dealing with complex fleets and understands the value of what you are doing.'

This focus on service, rather than a narrower approach that treats fleet management like a transactional commodity, can leave fleet teams at odds with procurement colleagues.

But, if a supplier lets down or disappoints a driver, it's the fleet department's reputation on the line. A good fleet management supplier should feel like an integral part of the fleet team, combining day-to-day administrative tasks with data-based insights to improve efficiency and service levels.

It is beneficial for this type of review to be formalised in order to monitor performance against service level agreements and measure costs and savings.



How to pick a fleet management and mobility partner

By Jayne Pett, Sales and Marketing Director, Fleet Operations

Managing a fleet can be a challenging undertaking, but getting it right is a critical ingredient to a safe, happy, productive workforce, operational efficiency, environmental sustainability and a healthy bottom line.

An outsourced fleet and mobility management service can help you deliver in all of these areas, freeing up valuable time and generating significant cost-efficiency savings.

Not all fleet management companies are created equal, however. Here, we've outlined some of the most important considerations as you look to narrow down your shortlist.

Define your objectives

At the outset you should establish your fleet and mobility requirements. Only then can you formulate your selection criteria.

What are your current pain points and your key motivators for outsourcing?

This question should be asked beyond the confines of the fleet department. All relevant stakeholders should be engaged, from finance, procurement and health and safety to operations, HR and sales.

These teams are unlikely to be able to offer market-leading expertise across all the skillsets needed to run an efficient fleet.

Sustainability, for example, might be a business priority, but does the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) and more environmentally-friendly mobility solutions expose gaps in expertise and knowledge.

Ensure expertise across all services

Offering fleet services can be very



different to having genuine experience and proficiency in delivering them. Study prospective providers' credentials carefully and make sure they have the capacity and flexibility to handle your specific requirements.

Fleet transport is rapidly evolving and will continue to do so. Do they have their finger on the pulse of latest developments – from electrification to disruptive tech – to enable them to dynamically shape and future-proof your fleet?

Is your preferred partner independent?

The importance of independence from leasing companies, manufacturers or dealer groups should not be underestimated. This is essential to delivering fully-tailored fleet management packages and offering impartial advice.

Promises must be kept

Meaningful service level agreements (SLAs) and measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) should be agreed from the outset and reported on regularly to ensure performance is delivering on expectations. Return on investment is crucial, but it should be remembered that not everything is quantifiable and your preferred partner should be sensitive to all your business and driver needs.

Digital innovation is paramount

Advanced software solutions have become integral to fleet and mobility management decision-making, so check that your preferred partner is ahead of the curve.

Technology innovations – such as Fleet Operations' Driver Companion app and award-winning MOVE software suite – can deliver real fleet efficiency savings and improve the working lives of drivers.

There can also be advantages to proprietary software systems, rather than off-the-shelf third-party solutions, that can be customised to meet your business requirements, so check, not only what the tech means for you, but who has ownership.

Is there a good cultural fit?

It's important to take time out and visit prospective partners. You can often tell straight away if they're right for your business. If your company cultures, modus operandi and employee personalities align, the prospects for a successful, long-term relationship are much greater.

Demonstration, not proclamation

Finally, check the fleet management company has a proven track record and ask for testimonials and references. The voice of a third party can offer real insight into how clients are served.

For more information contact Fleet Operations on 0844 567 8000, email advice@fleetoperations.co.uk or visit www.fleetoperations.co.uk



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KEY QUESTIONS TO LEASING PARTNERS

Picking the right leasing company is essential for fleet success

By Andrew Ryan

For most companies, the relationship they have with their leasing provider will have the biggest influence on the success of their fleet operations.

Whether you simply use the leasing company as a funder, put your maintenance through them or have a fully outsourced fleet management contract, having the right partner will have a dramatic effect on efficiency.

Get it right and it can lead to a long, hassle-free agreement for both fleet decision-makers and their drivers, as well as reducing costs, introducing new initiatives and future-proofing against changing trends.

Get it wrong and it can lead to unnecessary additional cost, unsuitable vehicles, poor customer service and, potentially, a difficult exit.

There are steps fleet decision-makers can take to ensure they maximise the chances of a successful relationship.

Step one is all about preparation – and it's often where companies get it wrong. Fleets need to do their home-

work, be clear about what they need and understand how they will manage the contract and what key performance indicators (KPIs) and service level agreements (SLAs) will help. They need to define the purpose of the exercise: is it better service, lower cost, support for drivers, improved vehicle uptime or a combination of some or all?

Engage other stakeholders in the business to ensure the tender meets organisational needs.

This approach doesn't just help the fleet to define and understand what it is looking for; it gives the leasing companies the best chance to provide a comprehensive application.

Contract priorities differ dependent on the size and type of fleet, its requirements and whether the organisation is in the public or private sector. However large the exercise, the same best practice guidance applies when selecting suppliers to contact.

Include basic financial checks and industry checks: speak to other fleets to find out their experiences.

The size of a leasing company alone should not overtly influence a deci-

sion. What is more important is that the potential suppliers have the capability, capacity and competence to deliver the services the fleet needs.

Fleets can either source their vehicles from a single leasing company or from a number of providers: each approach has its pros and cons.

Sole supply can result in strong relationships which can be beneficial when it comes to working on new initiatives. In addition, larger fleets have traditionally negotiated good terms on solus arrangements.

However, using multiple leasing companies can drive down costs and limit rental creep. For example, using dual or multi-supply enables a fleet to sense-check the funding quotes of one leasing company against another.

Key questions in the tender document should focus on operational delivery. Others should look at quality and reliability, speed and flexibility, value for money, strong service delivery and clear communication, financial security.

Questions should cover five categories: price, service, capability, references and user experience.

Price: Create a representative basket of vehicles for quoting, breaking out the key elements of the rental/services – depreciation, cost of funds, maintenance and tyres, admin/management fees etc. – to compare each area of spend. Ask about rebates, end-of-contract profit sharing, mileage pooling, vehicle reallocations etc. Also question end-of-contract damage policies and how any waivers operate.

Service: Challenge how the leasing company ensures consistently high levels of service – how does it target first call resolution? How does it manage call volume, staff incentives and training?

Capability: Cover each area such as quotes and orders, dealer management, servicing and maintenance including tyres and breakdown, accident management, data and MI (management information) etc. You want the supplier to show there are controls, that it ensures the driver is managed, it looks at the root cause etc.

References: Requesting references should be standard, but a fleet should always ask for lost clients as well as existing ones.

User experience: Think about the end-to-end experience, from the first point of contact, through quote to order and delivery, service and maintenance, collisions and damage. How easy is it to quote? How will they support those who need to discuss their options? Also ask what happens when things go wrong and how vehicles are managed at contract end.

Cut through the noise to find **your** next Fleet Partner



By Christopher Caddick, **Head of Business Development** at JCT600 Vehicle Leasing Solutions (VLS)

In today's marketplace, every provider worth their salt is providing solutions to support customers in transitioning their fleet to electric. So, with information about the transition to EVs everywhere you turn, how do you cut through the noise to find the right provider for you?

If you're looking to move all, or part, of your fleet to electric, it's no longer just about finding a provider with an EV solution, it's about finding a partner that's right for you. They all have access to the same information and similar tools, so how do you differentiate between them? Well, you go back to the fundamentals of service.

Find a partner aligned with your business

With replacement cycles of three to four years, you will be working with the partner for a while, so the chemistry needs to be right on both sides. Don't be afraid to ask your shortlist providers if you can spend time with the team who will be delivering and supporting your employees throughout the scheme. You'll get to see how they work, how you would work with them, and see their expertise first-hand.

Be confident in the solution recommended

The scheme should be tailored to meet your fleet objectives, don't be pushed to take a 'package'. Look for a provider who will tailor their solution to you, using your objectives as the North Star throughout. At any point during the implementation, launch and ongoing management, if you're not sure it's right, go back to your objectives – are you still meeting these?

Are you being provided with the best technology?

Ultimately, the right technology will be a key factor in the long-term support offered to your drivers and your business. Spend time ensuring that the technology available provides a great user journey, simplifies complex processes, reduces administration for you the customer, and delivers information in a way that all stakeholders can get on board with.

Find a team you trust

Trusting your fleet partner is paramount, this starts from the very beginning and builds every step of the way. Do they understand your needs, have they provided different options and helped you understand the pros and cons of each?

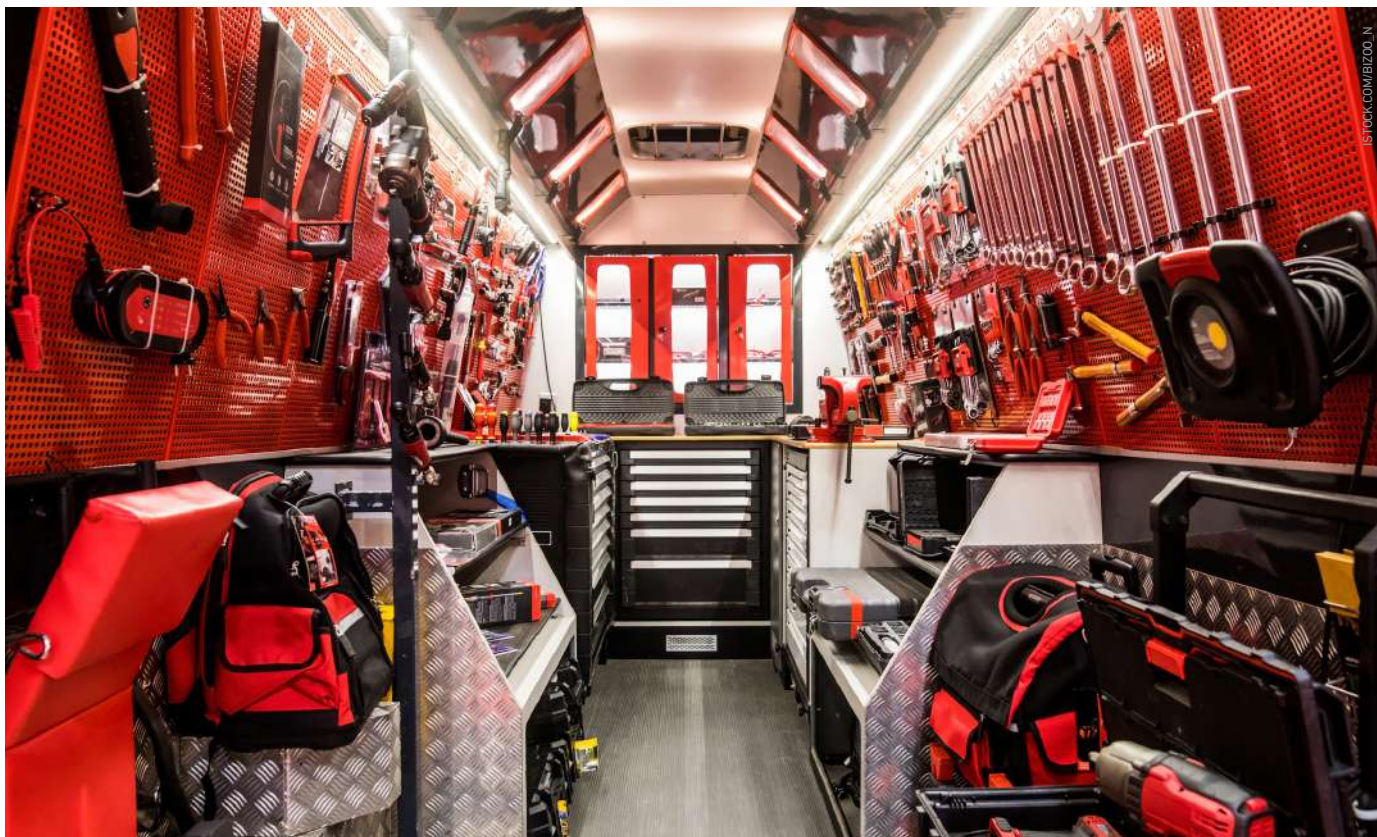
Are they being diligent in their approach to the scheme launch and not just rushing to go live? And do you trust that the team are there to support your employees, and not just interested in the orders?

As we are now well underway on the road to net zero, most providers are well-versed in delivering EV schemes and solutions for fleets so it is important to remember, it's not about finding a provider, it's about finding a partner who will deliver the right solution for you, exceptionally well. Keep the '3Ts' in mind – are you confident in the team? Are you being provided with the best tech to support your employees? And importantly, do you trust that they can deliver? If you can answer yes to each one, then you've found the right partner for you.

Don't let the EV transition overwhelm you, contact JCT600 VLS to find out how our solutions can help get your fleet on the road to success.

www.jct600vls.co.uk/talk-to-us
contactvls@jct600.co.uk
0113 319 1791





STACKING UP THE RIGHT ANSWERS

Design, weight, safety and workshop capacity all need to be assessed when choosing vehicle racking and converter partners

By Jonathan Manning

The transformation of a vanilla panel van into a ready-to-work fleet vehicle involves countless decisions. These include: What is the optimum design of the vehicle? How light, robust and safe is the racking? And what capacity does a converter have on its production line to keep pace with fleet demand?

From the drawing board, fleets need to have confidence that any racking supplier will ensure that whatever is fitted to a vehicle is safe, crash-tested, and will not jeopardise the payload of the van when it is in operational use.

Checking that it's the supplier who will do the work, and not a third-party sub-contractor, forms part of this quality control process.

Successful installations should also boost the productivity of drivers by helping them organise their tools,

equipment and spare parts in the most efficient configuration.

"The right racking partner should take time to fully understand your requirements and bring innovative ideas to the design to save space, weight and money," says Tony Murphy, fleet manager, Murphy Plant.

"They need to be forward-thinking, drawing on their experience of working with other fleets."

Ideally, the process starts with determining the operational needs of the employees who will be using the van, before the racking supplier shares sketches and drawings of the internal lay-out to help to visualise how the vehicle will function.

Do operatives need shelves and cabinets, secure boxes for valuable tools and equipment, floor space to create a workshop complete with bench and vice, a basin for washing, extra power, heating and lighting, ladder racks and even a microwave?

Colin Hutt, fleet and environmental manager, Clarion Housing Group, assembled a working group of drivers to discuss how they used their vans and the features they wanted to see, while also maximising flexibility for use by different tradesmen by keeping the design as generic as possible.

This also allows for under-utilised vehicles to be used as replacements by other operatives when their own vans are off the road.

Selecting a simpler racking design has helped to save money at a time when racking prices have shot up, adds Hutt, who advises approaching two or three potential suppliers to ensure competitive quotes.

The capacity of racking partners to carry out the work is also a principal consideration for larger fleets, particularly given the uncertain delivery times of new vehicles.

"We want all the work done at the

same time – security features, racking, telematics and livery – so it's a key-for-key swap when the driver picks up their new van and hands in their old one," says Hutt.

"We try to use smart sheets so we can monitor the progress of the work on a live basis."

If the racking partner does not have the capacity to fit out unscheduled vehicles, Hutt faces the invidious choice of turning down scarce vehicles, finding an alternative supplier, or commissioning part of the work and relying on mobile fitters to finish the job while the vehicles are on site.

Warranties and aftersales support can also be key considerations, especially as vehicle holding periods are extending.

"If there are any issues, you need your supplier to come out and fix them quickly," says Murphy. "They need to understand the importance of response times."

Costs and the objective of supporting a circular economy are also raising the prospect of fleets redeploying racking equipment from one vehicle to its successor, although the process is not without complications.

For a start, there is the operational downtime while the donor vehicle is stripped before salvaged racking can be fitted in its replacement.

Then there is the uncertain condition of racking at the end of a tough working life, although the most costly components, such as ladder racks, are now being reused.

System Edström equips TrustFord's first all-electric mobile service van



David Sawford hands the keys to Wayne Bryant, along with (from left) Carl Drummond, James Cosgrove, James Bacon, Stuart Cresswell and Judd Brindley

System Edström has handed over the first electric van fully equipped with its racking to TrustFord Mobile Service. On Wednesday, June 7, the racking company's Commercial Director, David Sawford, handed the keys to TrustFord's Wayne Bryant, who will use the van in his day-to-day role.

The van, which will be deployed in the Heathrow area of Greater London, was delivered to TrustFord's centre in Hayes. It is the first fully-electric van on the service fleet and has been kitted out to allow Wayne to perform all the aspects of his role, servicing vehicles for customers at a location convenient to them.

A trusted partner

TrustFord chose to work with System Edström because of the latter's expertise in providing complete racking and power solutions for electric vehicles (EVs).

James Bacon, Head of Mobile Service at TrustFord, said: "We have a great working partnership with System Edström and the product is exactly what we need. It was

important we worked with a partner who understands the needs of our aftersales technicians while they are on the road."

One of the main challenges faced in equipping an electric van to the demanding standards required by TrustFord was keeping the weight down.

"We needed to make sure that the weight of the vehicle and all the equipment required for us to effectively operate it made it a seamless and enjoyable experience for the technicians using it," added James.

A commitment to sustainability

The van is the first step in TrustFord's commitment to moving to battery electric vehicles. It is excited by what the new Ford offers and, as the market leader in mobile service vans for Ford customers, with national coverage in the UK, it was keen to pioneer an all-electric Transit in its fleet.

James continued: "It is early days and the feedback from those experiencing this vehicle will be key to scoping out our next steps. But we are excited about the

opportunities this will bring. Many of TrustFord's sites are centred in major UK cities and the link to helping the environment through a bigger fleet of all-electric mobile service vehicles in built-up areas and beyond is clear."

David added: "We are delighted to continue working with TrustFord on this project and to our continuing collaboration on even more EVs in the future. This exciting project will involve us installing our racking solutions in more electric vans, allowing TrustFord's mobile engineers to service customer vehicles in a more sustainable way.

"With the share of EVs in fleets set to grow over the next few years, operators need a van racking supplier they can trust to install storage and power supply solutions in their fleets. At System Edström, we have invested in our team to ensure they have the necessary expertise and qualifications to work on EVs. This means our customers can relax in the knowledge that their systems will be installed safely and securely."

For more information, call: 01536 203040

Email: info@edstrom.co.uk

Visit: www.systemedstrom.co.uk

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CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS 'A LOT OF PLANNING'

Each fleet has a unique operational profile, so charging solutions have to be bespoke to suit individual requirements



By Jonathan Manning

In the race to electrify, fleets are at risk of putting the proverbial cart before the horse, sourcing battery-powered vehicles before a charging solution is in place.

In an ideal world, fleets would have the time to create a complete electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem before the first zero-emission vehicle whirrs into the workplace car park.

But the world is far from ideal, which makes the selection of the right charging supplier critical.

Armed with the necessary data, a good supplier can identify where a fleet needs charge points, how many it needs and what speed these should be to meet operational requirements.

In conducting this analysis, there's no standard playbook; every fleet is unique and likely to use a different balance of home, workplace and public charging, says Steve Openshaw, group fleet and transport manager, Eric Wright Group.

He used telematics data to assess which vehicles were suitable for a

transition to electric power, based on their operational usage, and then spent six-to-12 months researching potential charge point suppliers.

"I was looking for a supplier with longevity that could support us with both hardware and software," says Openshaw.

Such is the rapid pace of change and consolidation within the charging industry that some of the companies he approached at the start of the exercise were no longer trading at the end, having been bought by rivals.

While public sector fleets can take advantage of Crown Commercial Services' framework agreements that have conducted due diligence on suppliers' financial stability and environmental credentials, private sector fleets want the confidence that their supplier will be there for the future, to update charging hardware and software and keep charge points working.

"A lot of car manufacturers provided home chargers, so that has not really been an issue for us," says Openshaw. "The issue is more with

commercial fleet, where you need to have some form of consistency with your charging options.

"You are looking for a supplier that can support you on a large number of chargers – perhaps up to 100 – and have a back office system to support you with charging data."

This software needs to synchronise seamlessly with fleet management IT systems, and also future-proof itself in case an employer decides to introduce a payment system for staff wishing to plug in EVs at a later date.

Openshaw also built flexibility into the future of his infrastructure, initially installing 20 charge points but retaining the option to install as many as 60, if required, without repeating costly groundworks.

Given the mission-critical business role of commercial vehicles, the quality of charge points and their uptime is also vital in the selection of a supplier.

"We have maintenance provision within the contract that includes periodic inspections, and have an agreement that, if a charge point fails,

our supplier will come to fix it within a timely fashion," says Openshaw.

He also recommends speaking to other fleets and the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) to understand the real-world experiences of peers in their dealings with their own suppliers.

For Defra, any supplier has to be willing to invest the time and effort to understand what the organisation is trying to achieve with its electrification programme, as well as its unique requirements, says Dale Eynon, director Defra Group Fleet Services.

"We spend a lot of time looking at telematics data, and the supplier we use analyses that data to understand the patterns of usage of our vehicles, their mileage, how often they start from home, what typical journeys look like," he says.

"On a site-by-site basis they would then recommend a solution for us. It also needs to be an intelligent provider that can set out a realistic programme of work.

"Charging infrastructure needs a lot of planning."

POWERING YOUR FLEET THE RIGHT WAY



ChargedEV has comprehensive solutions to power your fleet the right way. We understand the unique needs of fleet managers through the UK, and we're committed to providing infrastructure that enhances your efficiency and convenience. If you're already electric, or starting your transition to embracing the future of sustainable transportation, ChargedEV, the leading provider of charging solutions for fleets, is here to empower you on this journey.

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FIELD FORCE

The largest dedicated, employed and truly nationwide installers including NI.

2000

COMMERCIAL INSTALLATIONS

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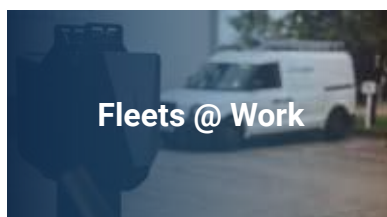


CUSTOMISATION

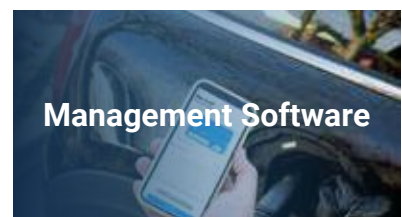
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MAKING THE MOST FROM SELLING YOUR VEHICLES

Maximising resale prices of company cars and vans is critical for any organisation that carries the residual value risk of its vehicles

By Andrew Ryan

Achieving the maximum resale value for a vehicle when it leaves a fleet is a must for organisations that outright purchase or finance them.

While residual values (RVs) are influenced by external factors such as supply and demand, as well as being vulnerable to seasonal and industry trends, actions taken by a fleet decision-maker and their remarketing supplier can make hundreds of pounds difference per vehicle.

These gains can be critical to help an organisation achieve its desired whole-life cost performance, or to maximise returns from vehicles.

Factors the decision-maker and remarketing supplier can influence include the condition of the vehicle, where it is put up for sale, and how.

A variety of sales channels are now open to fleets, from physical auctions, to online sales to direct negotiations with traders.

Each has its advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, it is vital a remarketing partner can identify the best channel for a particular vehicle.

This may include the location where a vehicle is sold if put through a physical auction: a remarketing supplier should be able to identify a geographical 'hot spot' where vehicle types and models perform best.

This means it must have the ability to monitor remarketing trends and, ideally, be able to respond to them.

The number of vehicles being defleeted will also influence the choice of remarketing supplier.

A large fleet or leasing company could be disposing of hundreds of vehicles per month, whereas a smaller fleet could be selling 10 or fewer over the same period.

The more vehicles being defleeted, the greater the appeal of the major auction houses which have the facilities and audiences to deal with high vehicle volumes.

This is because vehicle collection,

assessment, preparation and promotion require significant resources and infrastructure, and buyers will tend to gravitate towards online or physical sales where a large selection of vehicles gives them the greatest choice for the least time and effort.

However, using smaller, more local, remarketing companies can have benefits, particularly for those fleets with specialist vehicles or who want to offer their vehicles to the widest possible potential customer base.

It can also give the fleet the flexibility to select sales where their vehicles will stand out, rather than be lost in a high number of similar makes and models, which is likely to impact the sale price.

Ted Sakyi, European head of fleet at LKQ Europe, uses both a major remarketing company – BCA – and a smaller one – G3 Remarketing, based in Castleford.

"We have 254 locations across the UK, so when it comes to moving vehicles from maybe down south, up

north, and you take the delivery cost and pick ups and other factors into account, it's just easier sometimes to use a larger remarketing company," he says.

"But, we've also worked with G3 Marketing for probably more than 10 years. So how do we choose our remarketing supplier? It comes down to the relationship we have with them, also the price structure, and also where the vehicles will be sold, as they achieve different values in different parts of the country.

"You also have to take many other factors into consideration. How quickly can they get rid of the vehicles? What is the best price it can get them out for? What is the reporting like? What is their advice like?"

Sakyi says it is vital a fleet decision-maker views their remarketing company as a partner, not just as a supplier.

"It's also about transparency. Myself and my team have got enough on our plate, so we need the subject matter expert to really be proactive and say 'what about this, what about that, how can we help?'," he adds. "Those little things go a long way."

Building trusted, transparent remarketing partnerships

Built on trust, transparency and value, Cazoo Wholesale was launched in May 2022 following the acquisition of CD Auction Group. Since then, we've developed a fully digital remarketing proposition, providing comprehensive defleet and disposal services through a fully flexible, customisable solution.

Vehicle defleet

From the moment a vehicle reaches the end of its contract, or before, we are able to appraise, image and dispose of stock – wherever it may be.

Offsite inspections reduce days-to-sell and facilitate sales in an open market as soon as vehicles are ready to be imaged and graded by our fully-trained British Vehicle Rental & Leasing Association (BVRLA) inspectors.

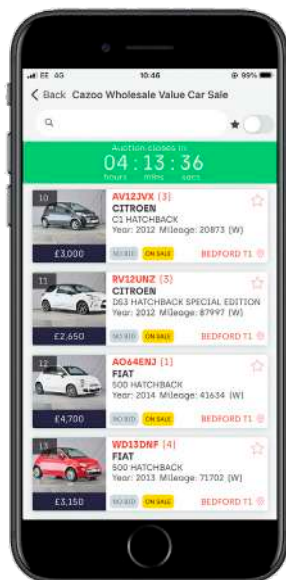
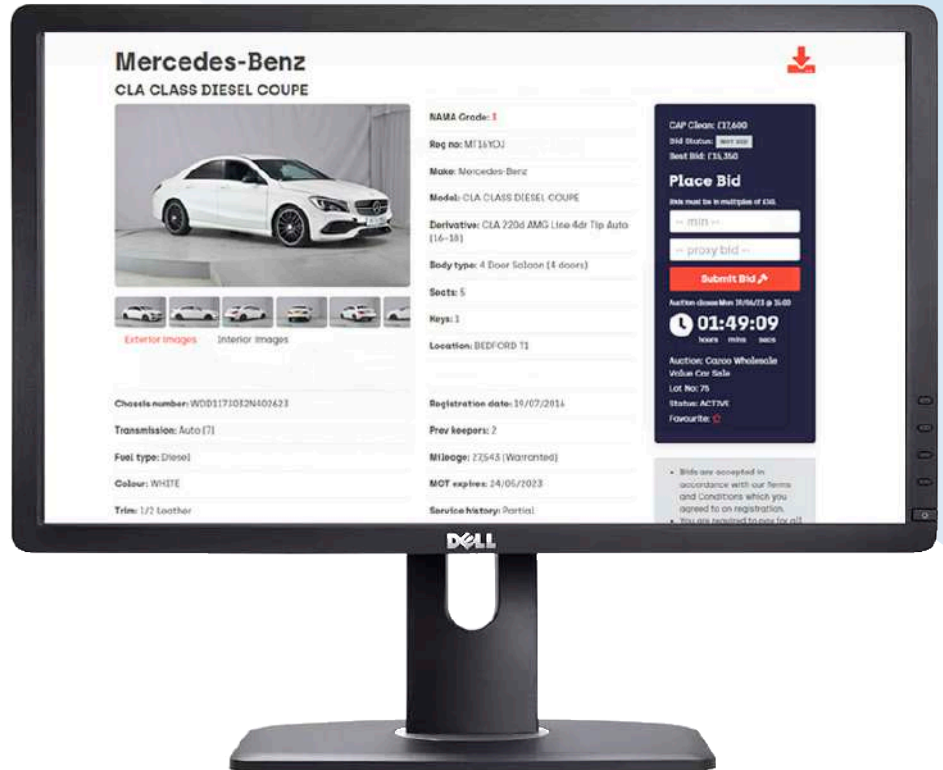
In addition to monetary savings, our appraisals help to reduce the environmental impact of defleet activities. In 2022, we saved enough CO₂ to fully charge more than 15 million smartphones by halving vehicle movements with remote inspections from across the UK.

For total transparency, all vehicles are graded to NAMA standards and for commercial vehicles, we have developed our own LCV Grading matrix.

Our appraisals are used by leading fleet and contract hire companies for damage recharging and RV adjustment, ready for vehicle disposal.

"We started using Cazoo Wholesale as part of our remarketing partner diversification, but primarily because of the bespoke closed sale auction it offered.

Cazoo Wholesale has been able to adhere to our strict requirements at all stages of the remarketing process. From asset collection and detailed inspection to a higher-than-average sale conversion, Cazoo Wholesale has proven to be a trusted



and valued partner. Above all, Cazoo Wholesale's ability to complete payment to us of all sales proceeds within one hour of the end of sale confirms their desire to compete against the already larger settled auction operators." – FN50 Vendor

Vehicle disposal

Selling more than 15,000 vehicles in 2022, our auctions run every day, offering vehicles by market segment and profile. Usually running for 24 hours, auctions can be tailored to your needs with auction days, sale duration and the buying audience fully customisable. Since May 2022, we've seen

a 30% increase in our buyer base. This growth is driven by our outstanding customer service and highly profitable fee structure, charging buyers a flat £250+VAT per vehicle regardless of price or volume, bringing equality and fairness to the market while helping to maximise returns.

We are also able to provide fully white-labeled auction platforms for fleets and rental companies to manage their own vehicle disposal, setting reserve prices and handling the invoicing and customer relationships.

Future developments

We know that trust and transparency are key. That's why we have just launched our CWAssured guarantee to provide total comfort to buyers. As a market first, our assured fee is included within the overall buyer fee meaning that buyers have total oversight of costs and potential profits.

For more information: Visit wholesale.cazoo.co.uk; email wholesalemarketing@cazoo.co.uk; or call 01536 409999 to see how we can add value to your remarketing programme

CAZOO
WHOLESALE

FIND SUPPLIERS WHO WANT TO BECOME PARTNERS



ISTOCK.COM/ TRAMING

Fleet profile and vehicle availability have become far more important selection criteria since Covid-19

By Jonathan Manning

The woes experienced by the daily rental sector in the past couple of years have been well documented – it has been starved of vehicle supply as stock-limited manufacturers have prioritised more profitable sales channels.

This has left rental companies to contend with smaller fleet sizes and older vehicles, which, in turn, is leading to a shortage of availability for fleet operators, especially for one- and two-day rentals.

And, as with any product or service, when demand outstrips supply, prices rise.

So, appointing a rental supplier (or two) involves a careful balancing act between availability and price.

"If you have negotiated the cheapest vehicle, but it's not available, you haven't solved your problem," says Chris Connors, head of facilities and fleet, Vistry Group.

"Cost is not the only measure of a supplier – their support, the types of

vehicles, including vans, that they have on fleet and their vehicle availability are also vitally important."

Speaking to fellow fleet operators about their experiences with different rental companies is a practical way to gain deeper insights into their real-world performance than sales pitch promises, adds Connors.

Mindful that hire vehicles are required to satisfy specific business needs, from replacing a company vehicle off the road for a day, to providing a solution for three months and longer to cover specific contracts or fill gaps until a fleet can lease permanent vehicles, Connors says it is essential to identify the key deliverables that are important to the business and find a supplier that wants to act like a partner to navigate through these difficult times.

"In fleet, we provide vehicles for our internal customers, our employees, and they don't mind whether those vehicles are coming from the fleet team or our supplier, they just need solutions," he says.

Choosing a supplier with an app or online portal that enables staff to book rental vehicles with ease (with appropriate authorisation safeguards) minimises administrative tasks for the fleet department, while having a clear idea of where and when the business might need rental vehicles can also help to identify suitable suppliers.

"There can be a lot of variability around the service provided – and, within that, vehicle choice and availability. A rental company could be very good in a certain area, because it has a good branch, with lots of availability and strong customer focus. But, elsewhere, it might not have the same presence and have to rely on other companies for support. And then you see service levels really drop off," says Connors.

Overlaying maps of where your business needs vehicles and where rental companies have branches is a basic exercise that can identify both good fits and under-represented regions, while also helping to mitigate

against collection and delivery charges if rental stations are not close to a business's premises.

Writing terms for vehicle availability into service level agreements (SLAs) is tempting, but difficult to enforce given the current dearth of short-term hire vehicles. Four-hour delivery times are more likely to be 24 hours, if they are available at all, but SLAs can still play a valuable role.

"They are a good way to introduce key performance indicators (KPIs) as a measure to track and identify good performers – a useful way of evidencing the good and showcasing what needs to improve. Things will go wrong – rental wasn't perfect before Covid – but we utilise KPIs as a way of measuring performance over a period of time," says Connors.

He has chosen to source rental vehicles through Vistry's leasing supplier, for convenience and for the neatness of the transition from hire vehicles to lease contracts. This also helps with invoice accuracy and the policing of any unfair damage claims.



Finding the right mobility partner

Fleet managers need to strike a balance between having a focus on the environment and keeping people on the move to deliver the services customers need.

Strong supplier partnerships are, therefore, critical and at Europcar Mobility Group UK, we have always maintained an ethos of working as closely as possible with our clients to understand – and respond to – their business needs.

Collaborative partnerships mean clear and direct communication – and that helps both organisations.

Working directly with Europcar helps any fleet manager plan effectively for their future mobility needs. For example, focusing on greener mobility – and cutting costs – means businesses are asking what forms of mobility would be best to use for each and every trip.

Switching an entire fleet from petrol and diesel to zero emissions alternatives is too big an outlay and commitment for most organisations to undertake in one hit.

Many businesses are taking a “test and learn” approach, transitioning some fleet to fully electric while also switching to more up-to-date internal combustion engine (ICE) and hybrid vehicles as well as encouraging

the use of public transport, walking or cycling wherever possible.

Our consultative approach, matched with our extensive range of mobility services that go beyond simply daily rental, enables us to keep our clients’ businesses moving.

Asking the right questions

When choosing a mobility partner there are probably a few key questions that should be asked:

■ What sort of fleet do you have?

Pretty obvious, but it’s critical to understand fleet mix as the drive to zero accelerates and businesses need to be able to test new motoring technologies before making serious long-term financial commitments. Through our strong manufacturer relationships Europcar has maintained a comprehensive fleet, from cars to vans and specialist vehicles, with an ever-increasing proportion of low and zero emissions vehicles.

■ Do you offer flexibility?

One size certainly doesn’t fit all in the mobility marketplace. It’s vital, therefore, that any supplier can show flexibility in the way their services can be accessed.

Europcar offers the ultimate flexibility in vehicle use, from hourly to yearly, including on-demand, daily rental to long-term 28 days-plus, enabling businesses to select the mobility solution that’s fit for purpose.

■ How easy is it to book?

Most organisations are facing resource challenges; making it easy to book is therefore crucial and online booking tools should be central to any supplier’s offering.

Europcar offers a web-based rental management solution enabling customers to book a vehicle directly online, view and amend existing reservations.

■ How responsive can you be?

A comprehensive network of locations and strong logistics is crucial to meet the sometimes unpredictable mobility needs of business drivers.

Europcar’s Delivery and Collection service, facilitated by our strong network of locations, is integral to what we do for fleet and corporate customers.

And our connected vehicle strategy helps us know whether vehicles are ready for collection and are situated at the intended pick-up point.

To find out more about Europcar’s business solutions visit www.europcar.co.uk/business or call 0371 384 0140



WHAT TELEMATICS DATA DO YOU REALLY NEED?

ISTOCK.COM/AUDIOUWERBURG



Be clear on your data requirements, reporting needs and a system's ease of use when connecting your fleet

By Jonathan Manning

Everything, Everywhere, All at Once may have won the best picture Oscar at this year's Academy Awards, but it's also the promise of vehicle telematics providers.

The opportunity to know in granular detail every aspect of a vehicle, from its location, to how it's being driven, to the performance of its engine may feel empowering, but it also runs the risk of becoming overwhelming if fleets aren't clear about their objectives from the outset.

Safety, cost reduction, operational efficiency, customer service and any one of a number of alternative benefits of telematics are not mutually exclusive, but prioritising specific goals makes it easier to extract business-critical information from a tsunami of data.

"The most important things to us are the safety of our drivers, mitigation of our insurance liability and product protection – protecting the company in every way we can," says

Peter Kelly, group compliance and fleet manager at Elis, the commercial laundry service.

To achieve these objectives, Elis wanted a joint telematics and camera system (two cameras on vans, four on heavy commercial vehicles) that would synchronise driving data with before and after video from incidents.

Kelly was also determined to future-proof the supply agreement by insisting that any updates during the term of the contract would be available free of charge, to avoid frequent renegotiations.

When Elis issued a tender for its 750-vehicle fleet, no telematics provider could meet its requirement to also supply cameras, so the company had to agree to dual suppliers, although video footage is fed directly to the telematics platform.

"We wanted a system that was easy for our operators to use, because if it's not easy and they have to go to one platform for telematics, another for cameras and a third for other information, they won't use it.

Everything on the vehicle had to be accessible to our transport managers just by going to one platform," says Kelly.

A similar approach was essential for reporting, given the volume of data and number of reports that telematics can generate.

"We looked closely at understanding the data that comes out of telematics, because if someone has to go into 50 different reports to get basic information, they are not going to do it. And we looked at how to consolidate this information so it's user-friendly to a transport manager," says Kelly.

Elis merges measures of harsh braking, incidents of speeding, average fuel consumption and daily driving 'events' into an overall score for each driver. This presents managers with reports that identify their best and worst performing drivers, and allows the company to standardise reports nationwide.

A monthly incentive scheme with vouchers for top performing drivers started to have a marked impact on

driving behaviours within a fortnight of its introduction.

Annual training provided by the telematics company has also proved important. Customer service teams, for example, can use the system to tell customers the location of vehicles and monitor the cameras to see how many cages of laundry are loaded or unloaded at a client's premises; and Elis's insurers have direct, instant access to camera footage to review a claim and assess where fault lies.

"When we came to insurance renewal, we presented everything we were doing in mitigation to our brokers and we had more insurers wanting to insure us because we classified as a good risk," says Kelly. "We can settle claims quicker, and that can save up to 50% if we can settle immediately."

And drivers have swiftly understood that the system is there to protect them, defending them against spurious and disputed claims, accomplishing Elis's principal goal for installing telematics – driver safety.

How should you select a telematics supplier?



By Beverley Wise,
Webfleet Regional
Director for
Bridgestone
Mobility Solutions

A study by Bridgestone and Webfleet has revealed that 71% of UK fleets have

set their stall out to introduce new tech this year in a bid to mitigate rising costs and operational pressures.

Indeed, the efficiency and sustainability benefits that can be unleashed by the latest, advanced fleet management solutions are far-reaching, offering a precious route to greater business resilience when it is needed most.

Select the wrong solution or supplier, however, and your tech investment can become a redundant asset or, at best, it can be found wanting and be underused. Here, we outline some of the key considerations when choosing a telematics partner.

Set your objectives

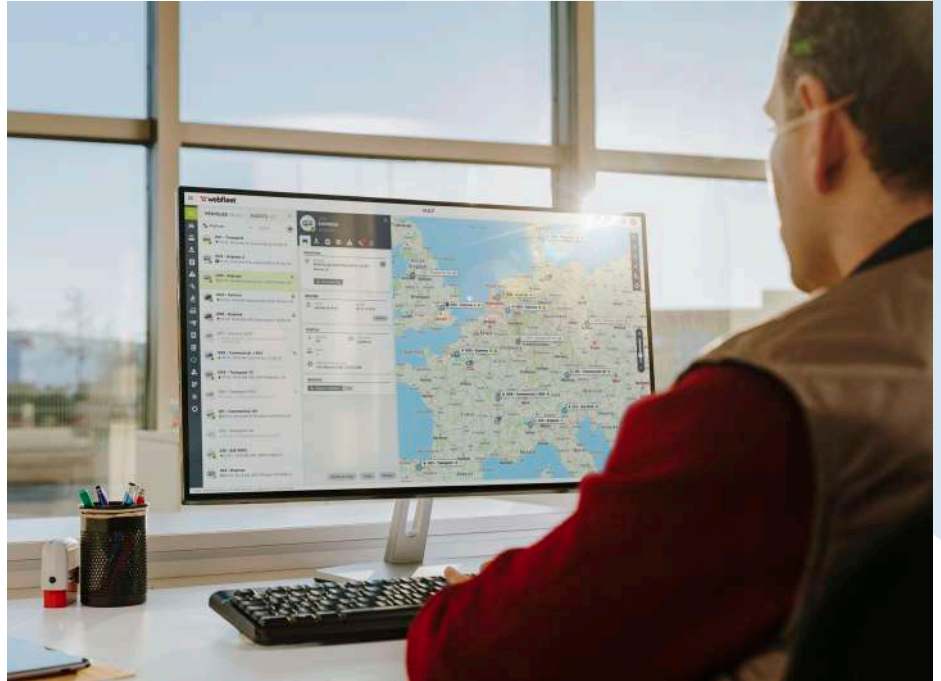
At the outset, you should be clear about your goals. Are these as simple as wanting greater control and visibility over a mobile workforce? Or is the objective to cut fuel costs, improve customer service, support compliance or support fleet electrification?

Prospective suppliers should be able to clearly demonstrate how their solutions will help you achieve your ambitions. Requesting a trial can, in some cases, prove a wise move.

Ease of use

Telematics systems process a wealth of data, but this information should be presented in a way that is easy to use and understand. Take time to understand how reports are generated and think carefully about how you require the information to be displayed to support smarter decision-making.

Can you create customisable reports specific to your business and objectives? Does the reporting allow you to manage



by exception? Does the system offer alerts that enable you to immediately address specific issues?

You should also consider the opportunities for integration with existing IT systems or job-specific platforms.

Can the system, for example, talk to customer relationship management (CRM) tools or enterprise resource planning (ERP) platforms? By ensuring a seamless flow of data between technologies, benefits can be realised across different business functions.

Plan ahead

As the needs of your business evolve, will the solution remain fit for purpose? Is it scalable and does your preferred provider have a proven track record for innovation?

It's important to choose a telematics partner that can not only can meet your existing requirements, but one that is well placed to meet your future needs.

Ensure the platform and associated hardware does not prohibit the system's evolution.

A spotlight on security

With cybercrime on the rise, you should also ask the right questions of prospective tech partners to ensure data security.

Check that systems comply with the Data Protection Act and meet international standards for data security and privacy. Ensure providers operate secure communication networks.

Find out what information security policies they have in place, and what technologies they deploy to protect data confidentiality and integrity.

Support for your business

Effective implementation and on-going support are critical if your business goals are to be met. Due diligence on preferred suppliers in these areas is essential before making a commitment.

Also be sure to do your homework on their history, financial position, customer base and support infrastructure.

Choose your fleet solution wisely and you will be laying the foundation stones for a more efficient, sustainable and productive future.

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