

# THE BUSINESS OF... DRIVER BEHAVIOUR

Help your drivers maintain a sense of pride in their vehicles, organise the most appropriate training and pick out the best safety aids available



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# How to make drivers proud of their commercial vehicles

There are many benefits to drivers taking pride in their cars and vans. *Sarah Tooze* looks at five ways to get them to take ownership

**G**etting drivers to treat their commercial vehicle as if it were their own has numerous benefits for the company: less wear and tear and damage to the vehicle and therefore less downtime, improved brand image if the vehicles are liveried and a higher resale value.

Colin Marriott, general manager, fleet at British Gas, which has a fleet of 13,000 vans, says: "We consistently achieve above market expectations on vehicle sale prices. Our vans have a great following in the remarketing industry as they are known to be generally allocated to one driver during their life with British Gas, and they are very well looked after. Generally, we achieve 105% of CAP book value."

But there is also a personal benefit for the fleet manager. Larry Bannon, national fleet services manager at NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT), who runs a fleet of 420 commercial vehicles and won Best Kept Fleet at the 2014 *Fleet News Awards*, says: "If I am driving down the motorway and I see one of our vehicles, 99% of the time it's clean and sparkling and it makes me so proud. And drivers equally have that pride."

So how do you instil that sense of pride in drivers?

## 1 PUT THE RIGHT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN PLACE

The first step is to outline the company's expectations about the condition of the vehicle. Have a policy on how often the vehicle should be washed and require drivers to perform daily checks of their vehicle.

For example, NHSBT's policy states that each vehicle must be cleaned inside and out every seven days, and drivers have to do a walk around check and defect report on every vehicle. Both elements are monitored by regional managers.

Make sure that drivers understand the policy from the outset and have the necessary tools to complete the tasks. Explain the company's policy to new employees during their induction, before they are handed a set of keys. Make them



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Colin Marriott,  
British Gas

**420**

Number of commercial vehicles on NHS Blood and Transport fleet

aware of the cost of the vehicle, particularly the cost of vehicle damage – not just the cost of repair but all of the 'hidden' costs associated with it, such as downtime.

Issue them with a copy of the British Vehicle and Rental Association's Fair Wear and Tear guide and explain the company's position on damage that falls outside that. Some companies choose to recharge for own fault damage as a way of getting drivers to take care of their vehicles, but this can lead to under reporting.

Show drivers how to perform a vehicle walk around check. BT, for example, provides a video of how to perform daily vehicle safety checks.

Smartphone apps can also assist drivers in carrying out checks. British Gas is trialling a vehicle checking app, with a view to rolling it out to all of its drivers in 2016

Marriott says: "We actively encourage engineers to carry out daily vehicle checks, and provide training to assist in this process. We provide facilities to carry out vehicle washing. We inspect vehicles for general condition, acting on defects found and encouraging drivers to look after their vans."

## 2 CONSIDER HOW OFTEN VEHICLES ARE REPLACED

Replacing vehicles as often as is financially viable can encourage the right driver behaviour. If it is not possible to replace vehicles every three or four years consider doing vehicle refurbishments to extend the lifecycle.

NHSBT replaces its vans every three-to-five years.

Bannon says: "We have a robust vehicle replacement programme which ensures that staff are always driving the most modern and latest model vehicles available. The average age of our vehicles is just over two years so the drivers are not too far away from the latest innovations."

## 3 INVOLVE DRIVERS IN VEHICLE SELECTION AND SPECIFICATION

Getting drivers involved in the specification of vehicles is key, according to Bannon. "The fact that they are involved, that they have a voice and input into specification, encourages them to take ownership," he says.

Fifteen years ago, when Bannon joined NHSBT, the organisation had a number of different depots, each with its own transport manager, and a variety of makes and model.

"The condition of the vehicles was less than an ideal and they were unreliable," he says.

Bannon created a vehicle working group, made up of driver representatives, which agreed a standard specification.

Rewarding good practice is likely to be more effective than catching out the bad drivers



*“We have a robust vehicle replacement programme which ensures that staff are always driving the most modern and latest model vehicles available”*

*Larry Bannon, NHS Blood and Transplant*

“It took a number of years to standardise the fleet but now we have vehicles that are fit for purpose,” he says.

The group now only needs to meet when a manufacturer makes changes.

“If we have specified electric mirrors and on next year’s model they are only available as part of an £800 pack, then we meet to discuss the economics of that,” Bannon says.

When it comes to choice of badge Bannon has the final decision as “that’s the strategic side of my job”, but he allows drivers to take demonstrators and gets their feedback on the vehicle’s look and feel and what is inside the vehicle from a driver’s point of view.

British Gas also involves its engineers in vehicle selection and specification.

Marriott says: “A huge effort is taken to include engineers in the selection of the most appropriate vehicle. We hold vehicle user groups to define each vehicle and racking specification. We actively communicate total cost of ownership during this process so they understand our procurement processes. We take engineer feedback seriously and do our best to incorporate suggestions for continuous improvement.”

British Gas carries out surveys to find out drivers’ views of their new vehicles. On average they rate their vans eight-to-10 out of 10.

Drivers are also involved in trialling new vehicles and equipment.

“Their involvement is key to our decision-making process,” says Marriott. “Their views count and we ensure they know that.”

#### 4 CHOOSE THE RIGHT LIVERY

Smart company branding can help to instil a sense of pride in drivers.

“All of our employees recognise and relate to our logo which is two hearts,” Bannon says. “When the National Blood Service changed to NHS Blood and Transplant the logo was going to change to an NHS symbol and there was an outcry from both drivers and our donors – they relate to the twin hearts. Many staff are donors in their own right.

“We have kept the hearts because it is very important we retain our own identity. Drivers feel ‘this is our organisation.’”

#### 5 REWARD AND RECOGNISE GOOD DRIVERS

Acknowledging drivers that have taken good care of their vehicles can foster the right behaviour among other drivers.

Recognition can take the form of a bonus, shopping/gift vouchers or simply a letter from the managing director praising the driver.

As a public sector organisation it is not appropriate for NHSBT to operate a financial reward scheme but Bannon is planning to introduce a driver recognition scheme by the end of the year as a result of fitting TomTom telematics to the fleet.

“Lots of organisations use telematics to look at who is speeding, harsh braking etc.,” Bannon says.

“We are flipping that around and recognising the good driving behaviours. They know they are being monitored but we’re not trying to catch them out, we want to ‘catch them in.’”

TomTom’s OptiDrive report scores drivers out of 10 and Bannon intends to marry this with the number of hours driven to determine the best driver.

He intends to have a driver of the month and, ultimately, a driver of year and team of the year.

“We want to show the top three drivers rather a league table of the bottom drivers,” he says. “We’re not interested in embarrassing drivers. We want them to be motivated and want to be in the top three.”

British Gas also favours recognition rather than financial reward.

Marriott says: “It is expected that engineers look after these expensive assets. However, we do issue personal acknowledgements from our recognition scheme to those drivers who return time expired vehicles in great condition.”

British Gas takes part in the Freight Transport Association (FTA) Van Excellence Driver of the Year competition and is enhancing its driver risk management system (which pulls in data from a number of areas, including licence checking, collision history, maintenance spend on the vehicle, fuel economy and tyre replacement and allocates drivers risk points) through the use of driver behaviour telemetry.

“That will not only identify those at risk but also identify those who drive carefully,” Marriott says. “This will help us to identify and reward great drivers.”

2016

British Gas will be rolling out its vehicle checking app next year



More on driver behaviour at: [fleetnews.co.uk/driver-behaviour](http://fleetnews.co.uk/driver-behaviour)

# Driver behaviour: managing the risks, reaping the rewards

**F**ewer accidents. Better fuel consumption. Increased staff retention. Managing the way your drivers behave when they're behind the wheel is a critical factor in the success - or otherwise - of your fleet. Get it right and the financial savings and reputational benefits can be significant.

## Rewarding best practice

Mercedes-Benz supports a number of customers with their driver behaviour management programmes, including sponsoring Ocado's Driver of the Year award for the past 5 years.



## Personality tests to assess risk

Ocado is also taking part in the ground-breaking 'Driver Safe 2015' Research Project, which is investigating whether it's possible to predict a driver's inherent in-vehicle risk status using psychometric and emotional intelligence (EI) profiling. The study hopes to identify high-risk personality types - a useful recruitment tool - and develop a bespoke programme of interventions to suit each driver's risk profile.

## Recognising drivers' customer service role

Driver behaviour also has a huge impact on a company's reputation. Every van in a fleet is a moving brand touch point and in many cases, the driver is the only human face of the brand. The desirable skillset of new recruits has expanded - operators are increasingly viewing their drivers as customer ambassadors.

Iceland Foods absolutely recognise this. The company's £250,000 Centre of Excellence in Deeside, sponsored by Mercedes-Benz, trains drivers in all aspects of safety and customer service. Specialist Mercedes-Benz driver-trainers work alongside Iceland's own team, helping them make the most of their Sprinter-only fleet, and staff from other areas of the business are trained here too, to help them better understand the challenges faced by drivers.



"Our drivers are ambassadors for Iceland and never more so than where online shoppers are concerned, because the doorstep delivery is likely to be their only direct interaction with a representative of our business."

Simon Pill, Centre of Excellence Training Manager, Iceland Food

## Leading the field

### Mercedes-Benz: unrivalled support for fleets

When it comes to managing driver behaviour, best practice comes in all shapes and sizes. Different companies approach the issue in different ways,

and Mercedes-Benz understands this, offering tailored support and innovative products and services to customers based on their individual requirements.

Coming soon is free driver training for Mercedes-Benz drivers, offered in conjunction with FTA Van Excellence - watch this space...



"We pride ourselves on the unprecedented levels of safety equipment and technology in our vans, but ultimately it's down to the driver behind the wheel to drive responsibly, so we are extremely proud to be the first van manufacturer to offer free training to our customers."

Steve Bridge, Managing Director, Mercedes-Benz UK - Vans



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# Which driver training method for your fleet?

When it comes to minimising accidents, many organisations continue to place strong emphasis on driver training. *Ben Rooth* reports



Learning from experienced colleagues is often the most effective introduction

It could be the ideal solution for any fleet that's experiencing an increasing number of hefty garage bills linked to at-fault collisions or excessive wear caused by speeding. Driver training ensures your employees have the best possible risk perception and hazard awareness skills which reduce their susceptibility to accidents or collisions on the road.

And the ultimate outcome of this training is simple. Not only should it protect your employee from injury, it should also reduce costs and reputational damage to your business.

Jenny Powley, sales director of corporate business at RAC Business, explains: "When your employees drive for a living, or even as part of their job, it's vital that they do it safely and efficiently.

"Driver training not only protects them from injury, but also helps reduce costs to the business and supports compliance with regulations covering occupational road risk."

The common consensus among industry professionals is that this training should meet the specific needs of employees – rather than be a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

Dr Will Murray, research director at Interactive Driving Systems (IDS), which provides tailored driver safety guidance globally, agrees with this sentiment, adding: "Based on our experience, training should be targeted and relevant – focusing on compliance, legal requirements and specific risk factors.

"Once this has been done, a whole range of courses are



*"When your employees drive as part of their job, it's vital that they do it safely and efficiently"*

Jenny Powley,  
RAC Business

available for both drivers and managers.

"If most of your drivers' collisions are happening at slow speed when vehicles are reversing at night, then the training should focus on slow speed manoeuvring at night. It might sound obvious, but there are still a lot of off-the-shelf training programs that do not target such specific risks."

## RISK ASSESSMENTS - IDENTIFYING THE BEST TRAINING

Fleet are advised to use every tool at their disposal to identify bad driving habits.

This can be achieved through examining and interpreting previous incidents; damage and misuse; licence endorsements; driver behaviour through telematics; and fuel use.

John Davidge, a former senior traffic police officer who is now head of fleet technical at Cardinus Risk Management, explains: "A key factor here is to be able to identify those drivers who are most likely to be involved.

"This might include new drivers who haven't learned the hard way yet, and also those with a history of such collisions.

"There's sound evidence from insurers that when a driver is involved in any collision, unless he or she takes positive steps to learn from the experience, the chances of repeating that collision are much greater."





To pinpoint an individual employee's requirements, they should also undertake an assessment which normally takes the shape of an online or paper exercise.

These are specially devised to identify appropriate training requirements.

Davidge adds: "Once the risk assessment has been carried out – in line with Health and Safety at Work principles – the next step is to apply control measures.

"In this case, that would be to provide appropriate training so that drivers understand the risks and how to avoid them.

"Those deemed to be in need of training are often put through e-learning in the first instance or, if that is not an option, seminar-style training, while high-risk drivers tend to benefit most from in-car training."

## BENEFITS OF: CLASSROOM TRAINING

Classroom training – sometimes referred to as "seminar training" – is often deemed to be most appropriate if large numbers of drivers have the same training needs.

It's one way for an organisation to ensure their safety obligations are quickly met – and evidenced – by getting all staff who require training in the same room at the same time.

Dr Murray says: "In-class training is particularly good as it gets people discussing issues and working together to develop solutions."

But – as the RAC's Powley points out – this method of training can prove a "logistical headache" for those fleets whose employees operate from different offices nationally.

She says: "Some prefer the flexibility of an online training course delivered in short, bite-sized modules, while others benefit from group seminars. Both undoubtedly have their place – so long as the content is tailored."

## BENEFITS OF: E-LEARNING

Effective e-learning – or online coaching – is good for engaging remotely-based employees, is quick and relatively easy to implement and requires minimal time away from work for participants.

Dr Murray says: "Once set up and statistically validated, it is effective for both assessment and coaching. Piloting of modules facilitates instant feedback and continuous improvement to the overall program."

Dr Murray believes this method of training is particularly useful for those organisations that operate globally as it enables "local culturally sensitive language, images and content" to be incorporated.

He adds: "Web-based solutions also allow for the integration of tailored videos, operator manuals, pre-use inspection checklists and other documents."



**E-learning has the advantage of being quick to set up and less time-consuming than other training methods**

*"In-class training is particularly good as it gets people discussing issues and working together to develop solutions"*



Dr Will Murray, Interactive Driving Systems

## BENEFITS OF: "BUDDY SCHEMES"

'Buddy schemes' offer a support structure for new drivers. Basically, a new driver will be given an experienced driver to help and support them through the early days of their careers.

As a result, they know they're carrying out their role for their employer in the most appropriate way possible.

Generally, these mentors offer guidance on all aspects of that employee's new role, in addition to their driving commitments.

The schemes have been promoted by the Professional Drivers' Association as an ideal way for HGV operators to provide assistance when it comes to loading and unloading, tachograph use, drivers' hours, picking the best routes – and much more.

## BENEFITS OF: ON-ROAD TRAINING

It's agreed by most training experts that tailored on-road training can have the most immediate benefits in reducing risk.

But – as ever – drivers need to be able to come away from the course with a set of skills that can be applied directly to the world in which they work.

Powley says: "Getting behind the wheel and assessing driving styles is often incredibly valuable, especially when coaching on specialist skills such as skid control.

"In our experience, on-the-road training can often work best when it's conducted in small groups or on a one-to-one basis.

"This allows the trainer to examine specific areas of driving skill and address any areas of concern, both to the trainer and the participants."

But Cardinus Risk Management's Davidge adds that in-car driver training should not be viewed as "driving test refresher training".

He explained: "The driver already knows how to drive – they just need training in avoidance techniques to reduce incidents and accidents.

"In-car training should not be viewed as a test, the driver trainer will concentrate on helping individuals to develop the visual and mental strategies required to improve risk perception and decision-making processes."

Dr Murray's issue with BTW training is that – to date – few programs have been "effectively evaluated".

"In a work context, drivers often have limited control over factors such as their work schedule, payment system, vehicle selection, journey management, route selection or site layouts – all of which are management-related," he says.

"For these reasons, many of the behind-the-wheel trainers have expanded their programs to focus on wider issues, such as fleet reviews, risk assessment, management policy and driver handbooks.

"I think it's worth stressing that driver training is only one element of road safety, along with the wider societal, organisational, journey management and vehicle-based factors that make up how we drive."



For more information on driver behaviour visit:  
[fleetnews.co.uk/driver-behaviour](http://fleetnews.co.uk/driver-behaviour)

# Extras to keep drivers on the straight and narrow

The increasing availability of in-vehicle safety technology and driver support aids is predicted to radically improve road safety. *Ben Rooth* reports

**A**dvanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) are no longer the stuff of science fiction. These devices automate everything from lighting to braking while also keeping the driver in the correct lane – and much more.

In recent years, telemetry and in-cab alerts have enabled fleet managers to monitor in real-time how well vehicles are being driven, while also providing instant feedback.

Dr Will Murray, research director at Interactive Driving Systems (IDS), explains: “Clear communication about what you are doing – and why – is key to ensuring the long-term success of any driver behaviour telemetry programme.”

“I think that you have to explain precisely how the data will be used – and how telemetry fits into the wider driver safety programme.”

“It is also important that drivers have a clear understanding of their data to ensure engagement.”

“For example, some systems provide in-vehicle feedback on harsh manoeuvres and most now have some mechanism – via the web or an ‘app’ – where drivers can view their own performance against any standards you choose to set.”

Many safety experts believe autonomous emergency braking (AEB) – which some manufacturers refer to as collision prevention assist (CPA) – is among the most significant new in-vehicle safety technology.

In essence, it uses radar, lasers and optical sensors to identify other vehicles and pedestrians and subsequently take action.

A spokesperson for Mercedes-Benz Vans explains: “Our collision prevention assist proximity warning system is based on a mid-range radar sensor installed in the vehicle front which monitors the relative velocity and the distance to the vehicle directly ahead – it is constantly active in the speed range from 18-100mph.”

The system subsequently gives the driver an audible alert before automatically applying the brakes if it anticipates a collision.

Crosswind assist supports the driver in strong, gusty side winds through automatic brake intervention in order to help the vehicle stay in the right lane.

At speeds over 50mph it corrects the vehicle’s course by means of automatic braking interventions at the wheels on the side of the vehicle facing the wind.

The Mercedes-Benz spokesperson added: “This way,



crosswind assist can help forestall any hasty inappropriate reactions, and enhance the driver’s feeling of safety.

“Mercedes’ Sprinter was the first van to be equipped as standard with crosswind assist – it is now available as standard on the New Vito range.”

The lane-keeping assist function has been developed by some manufacturers to reduce the danger of accidents arising due to lapses in attention.

Basically, it warns the driver by means of visual and audible alerts if the vehicle unintentionally drifts out of its lane of travel. It works by using a camera on the inside of the windscreen which registers clear lane markings by comparing differences in contrast between road surface and lane markings. An electronic control unit processes the data from the camera and the driver’s actions in order to determine whether the lane change is intentional or not.

Similarly, the blind spot assist function detects vehicles that can’t always be seen by a manual check and issues warnings to prevent a collision by means of a visual signal followed by an audible alert.

Radar sensors are again used to monitor those areas directly alongside and behind the van and if it identifies another vehicle – including a motorbike – to be present, a red triangle lights up in the corresponding exterior mirror. If the driver operates the turn indicator in spite of the warning, an audible collision warning is added to the visual one.

The high-beam assist function has been developed by manufacturers to ensure optimum illumination of the road ahead. It automatically controls the main beam to ensure the best visibility in accordance with the surroundings and traffic situation.

Manufacturers have been able to accomplish this by positioning a monitoring camera behind the windscreen and, if the ambient light conditions change, high beam is automatically activated or deactivated, depending on the surroundings and the traffic situation.



*“It is also important that drivers have a clear understanding of their data to ensure engagement”*

*Dr Will Murray, Interactive Driving Systems*



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