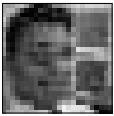


Vehicle telematics - who is driving the need?



Brian Martin explains how telematics is no longer just security, productivity and vehicle management

IN THE WORLD OF SALES you are always taught to go after the “MAN”; the person with the Money, Authority and Need. Yet in the world of Telematics he/she is rarely the same person. So who is making the decisions and who is driving the need?

In the not-so-distant past, the technologies supplied to the vehicle sector under the banner of Telematics fell into 3 distinct groups: Security, Productivity, and Vehicle Management. In brief:

Security: Tracking as a theft deterrent and vehicle recovery.

Productivity: Tracking to know where you are and where you've been.

Vehicle Management: Over revving, harsh breaking and service renewals.

In the above three cases the decision-makers tended to be in middle management. Decisions were often made as a reaction to circumstances rather than a proactive management strategy. For example:

- A vehicle gets stolen - forces the need to implement a theft tracking device
- Belief that an employee may be doing private work on company time - forces the need for clarification and the installation of a real time or historical location tracking device
- An increase in vehicle accidents - forces the need for monitoring driver behaviour.

What are the technologies used to satisfy the three needs?

There are a number of manufacturers that have saturated this market, all selling tracking units or “black boxes”, all fighting to supply and satisfy the needs of Security, Productivity and Vehicle Management.

Now times are changing. Any business operating company vehicles or allowing employees to carry out company business, however trivial, in their own vehicles needs to be well informed about the Duty of Care legislation.

There are an estimated three million company cars in the UK and a further five million privately owned vehicles all

Now times are changing. Any business which operates company vehicles or lets employees carry out business in their own vehicles must know about the Duty of Care legislation

being used on company business. Every year 3500 people are killed in road accidents in the UK; 30% are work-related resulting in a staggering £2.7bn total cost of work-related accidents to industry in the UK.

The cost to industry is not just financial as it can also be custodial. Charges like ‘Corporate Killing’, ‘Corporate Manslaughter’, ‘Killing by Gross

Carelessness’, and ‘Reckless Killing’ are all levied at company Directors. Is it any wonder the “Need” has changed and is now significantly influenced by the law and the Health and Safety Executive?

As a result of these legislative changes Directors have the liability and must now take part in this decision process

To fulfil fleet management and meet legislation we need a new breed of telematics

of implementing Fleet management strategies aided by vehicle Telematics solutions. It can no longer be left to individual business units alone as the risk is too great. Moreover, should the worst happen, the excuse provided by “no expertise” will not be accepted as a defence.

In the event of a serious incident involving a vehicle or employee on company business it is likely that the Health and Safety Executive will audit the company involved. Directors will be expected to provide maintained records of all vehicle and driver activities for this inspection. If they do not have such an audit trail, they would be well advised to start recording this information as soon as possible.

So the “Need” has changed. Telematics is not just Security, Productivity, and Vehicle Management. It has matured into part of the business process to

fulfil the need of providing a Duty of Care database, an invaluable aid to Director liability.

So who is making the decisions and who is driving the need? Well, the Directors are now needed to make the decisions to ensure that the need to comply with law and Duty of Care requirements is fulfilled.

Can the technologies of Telematics help? Yes it can but rarely using the average tracking unit or "black boxes." The need to fulfil fleet management and comply with legislation takes a

different breed of telematics company. One that has taken the time to ask questions, and seek answers to the day to day commercial and legal constraints placed upon company directors. Rather than going through a blinkered sales routine, akin to one-dimensional box shifting.

While taking nothing away from the need for Security, Productivity, and Vehicle Management, the new breed of Telematics companies can still provide these. Directors, like anyone in business, still have to justify spending costs and look at the potential return of

investment. The "Need" now is for systems that still offer substantial cost savings and increased efficiencies while helping businesses comply with Duty of Care requirements. As with any business process it's a case of "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it." The result: the need for a new breed of Telematics has never been greater. ■

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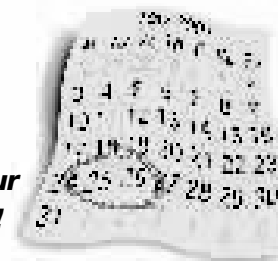
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