

Fleet safety - time to stop talking and take action!

TCOPlus managing director Bart Vanham and a key member of the Fleet Business Unit at TÜV SÜD, argues that while there is a lot of talk about introducing fleet safety initiatives, there is very little action taking place at a European level. *

It is my honest feeling that there is currently a lot of talk about fleet safety but not a lot of action...

I have been around for more than 20 years in fleet and started in 2010 as an entrepreneur in fleet as a car tax expert, before developing into TCO-expert. Together with partners, we have established successful enterprises in fleet consulting, IT tools like global reporting and what-if analysis tools, and with a specialist company, AlertDriving, focused on driver behavior and safety.

We started talking about fleet safety in 2009/2010 on the international and Belgian scene. At that time, some of the companies tried behind the wheel training and telematics was on the rise, especially in the UK.

Ever since, we have met a lot of companies who understand the need to do something to increase safety and reduce accidents or incidents. We talked a lot and listening to colleagues in the market – they also talked a lot. Enthusiasm voiced by fleet, HR or CSR managers during those meetings was not often translated into real actions, just a feeling shared by others in fleet...

The internal hurdles for those enthusiasts to sell such projects to the board were many. Some of the most frequently heard were: "It is money spent outside the core-business and it's challenging times; 'investments' should be to the core of the business; success of safety programmes is hard to measure; is data available and reliable...? it is not acceptable to only focus on the safety of company drivers; other projects, tenders and CO2-reduction, to name

but a few, are less HR-sensitive and may bring the same or better results"... I am sure you will be able to complete the list.

However, since then, initiatives to increase safety have multiplied, creating the possibility for companies to pick from a menu and make safety programmes bespoke to the culture of the company.

Furthermore, technology has made programs more accessible lowering the implementation hurdles and allowing an international scope of initiatives. E-learning safety courses, applications on smartphones to provide feedback on driving profiles and special communication programs etc have completed the list.

This allows companies to set up a customised program. For example, a light communication and light e-learning programme for non-company car drivers, measuring driving behavior, combined with customised fully-fledged e-learning for company car drivers and a behind-the-wheel course for those in need - or other mixes, even with an international scope, are available.

More than ever before, the business case to install a safety programme is positive. Fuel savings, savings related to direct and indirect cost of accidents, topped with employer or commercial branding benefits, far outweigh the costs, and the improved availability of data allows fleets to measure this.

The real motivator seemingly is country-specific regulations or directives like the Corporate Manslaughter act in the UK - safety is an established part of fleet management in the UK- plus new regulations in Germany, followed by the increased and very real attention companies are placing on Corporate Social Responsibility.

We feel a change is due and looking at the fleet magazines and event initiatives focusing on safety, we can say that fleet safety could become the next big thing in 2016/2017.

So take responsibility for your company and your society and start working on safety! The business case is there, the menu of products and services is appealing, the scope can be international and results can be measured. What are you waiting for?

For more information on fleet safety initiatives or to provide feedback please contact Bart Vanham at Bvanham@tcoplus.com

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