



Driver Professional Development: Building a Program That Works

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

What Fleets Get Wrong About Driver Development

02

Targeted Training: Tackling a Driver's Specific Issues

03

Continuous Coaching: Long-Term Coaching for All Drivers

04

Training the Trainer: Ensuring Coaches Have the Skills They Need

05

Steps You Can Take Today

What Fleets Get Wrong About Driver Development

- **One size does not fit all** when it comes to coaching drivers.
 - Fleets who try to standardize every aspect of their driver management program are setting themselves up for failure.
 - To the extent a fleet can, they should tailor every training plan to each driver's individual needs and behaviors.
- Fleets must establish a “why” that guides their training program.
 - Fleets should set a goal for their training program and then build their program based on that.
 - Example: “Our goal is to minimize telematics alerts.”
 - Following this method helps fleets answer questions like “What behaviors should we coach on? Which drivers should we be coaching? When should we coach a driver?”
- Orientation to a fleet is not sufficient training for most drivers.
 - It's not enough to give someone a three-day instruction on a fleet's processes and expect them to thrive. Onboarding should be at least a 90-day program, if not a year-long one.

Targeted Training: Tackling A Driver's Specific Issues

- **Audience Question:** “How do I generate buy-in from drivers who are reluctant to accept training?”
 - Drivers are much more likely to accept training if they have a strong working relationship with their managers.
 - Avoid reaching out to drivers only when they've done something wrong.
 - If drivers receive praise and feedback on their positive behaviors, they'll be much more likely to accept training on their negative behaviors.
- Proactive coaching strategies can help generate buy-in from drivers and identify the root causes of behaviors.
 - When a fleet is proactive and clearly communicates with a driver, their driver is more likely to believe they care about their development, which can make the driver more forthcoming with the problems they are experiencing.
- One of the best ways to identify the root causes of a driver's behavior is to simply ask the driver about them.
 - Drivers know more about themselves than their manager ever can. Often, simply asking them why they are speeding more than their co-workers can help you identify the root cause of their behavior.
- Consolidating technology systems into a single platform can help fleets identify which drivers need training.
 - The full story of unsafe behaviors is rarely “This driver has a speeding issue.” Instead, there are often a number of risk indicators in a driver's telematics, HR, training, and observational data. Fleets need to see all of them to identify risk.
- **Audience Question:** “How do I handle training owner-operators without asserting control over them?”
 - When you see an unsafe behavior, you have every right to intervene and address that behavior.
 - Fleets are just as liable for their owner-operators as they are for their drivers, so they need to discuss negative behaviors they notice when they can.

Continuous Coaching: Long-term Coaching For All Drivers

- The most successful drivers are generally the ones who continuously improve their skills.
 - No matter how successful a driver has been in the past, they can still benefit from continuous improvement. **The best professionals in any field constantly seek to sharpen their skills.**
 - Tucker Freight is working on offering continuous education to their drivers.
- How can fleets decide what skills to offer continuous coaching on?
 - First step: Ask your drivers. Your most involved drivers will have a list of skills they want to improve.
 - The same goals that guide your overall training program should guide your continuous coaching plan. If the goal of your program is to emphasize safety, you should continuously coach on safety skills.
- **Why continuous coaching is important:** The good is the enemy of the great.
 - When a fleet is satisfied with having “good” safety behaviors, they will slowly grow complacent. Continuous coaching can help ensure drivers are always focused on improving their skills and rarely grow complacent.
- **Audience Question:** “Can you talk about the measures that fleets can use to coach their drivers?”
 - At Tucker Freight, management tries to coach on the metrics their drivers can control. Examples: Speed management, fuel economy, harsh braking and cornering, etc.
 - **It's important to normalize your data.** Drivers in one region will have different speeding behaviors than drivers in another region, so it doesn't make sense to compare the two.

Continuous Coaching: Long-term Coaching For All Drivers

- **Audience Question:** “How do you score your drivers?”
 - Context is important. If you have a driver with a hard braking alert who is a 30-year veteran and otherwise safe, that’s different than someone with a harsh braking event who has only been a driver for a year.
 - Consolidating all your data into a single platform can give you more context about a driver’s alerts.
 - The [Idelic Safety Suite®](#) brings all of your technology systems into a single platform and uses AI-powered models to analyze all of your data. In doing so, Safety Suite is able to tell you how serious a telematics alert is for each individual driver.

Training the Trainer: Ensuring Coaches Have the Skills They Need

- **Common mistake #1:** Fleets assume their managers know something they don't.
 - Most driver managers are hired to play an operational role, so they don't always start with the safety knowledge they need to coach drivers on safety-related issues.
- **Common mistake #2:** Fleets assume their managers have the same priorities their leadership does.
 - Driver managers have to oversee operations, coach on safety issues, and deal with customers. With so many responsibilities, safety management issues can often fall to the wayside.
 - Fleets need to consolidate and automate as many of their driver managers' processes as possible, so each manager can give safety issues the time and attention they need.
- Just as it's important for drivers to continuously improve their skills, so too is it important for managers to continuously improve their skills.
 - Best practices for safety constantly evolve, so fleets should offer continuous coaching for their managers so they can stay up to date with newer best practices.

Steps You Can Take Today

- Fleets need to decide on the organizing principles of their training program. From there, they can answer questions like:
 - When should we administer training to drivers?
 - What skills should we continuously coach on?
 - How do we hold people accountable to their training?
 - What message should we push out about training?
- Fleets should solicit feedback from their managers on how they can improve their training program.
 - Driver managers are on the front-line of safety management and can give valuable feedback on how a fleet's safety program can be improved.
- Just because a fleet has always done something one way, does not mean they should continue to do so.
 - The core idea behind training is that we can always do better. Fleets tend to apply this thinking to their drivers, but they should also apply it to their own practices.

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TODAY

Q&A