



3 WAYS TO

Turn Training into Coaching and Improve Driver Retention



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Introduction

Building an effective training program can be the difference between a fleet achieving long-term success or undergoing a slow decline.

According to the [FMCSA](#), the number of truck occupants killed in large truck crashes is **the highest it's been in over 30 years**. At the same time, driver

turnover at large truckload fleets has remained [above 90%](#), continuing a trend that has remained consistent for years.

Even worse, this is all happening at the same time [Nuclear Verdicts are on the rise](#) like never before. Verdicts over \$1 million are 235% more common than they were six

years ago. On top of this, **the average size of crash-related verdicts has increased by 967%**.

As a result, many fleets have turned to improving their professional development programs to boost safety, reduce liability, and retain drivers.

The Strategies Fleets Need to Implement

Fortunately for fleets, there are three ways to elevate a professional development program and turn at-risk drivers into award winners.

This eBook will discuss how fleets can:

- **Target and tailor training to the drivers that need it most**
- **Ensure the safest drivers do not fall into a careless routine**
- **Coach driver managers to maintain a strong safety culture**

There are actionable steps fleets can take to target training, coach driver managers, and build a fleet culture that encourages safe behaviors. The following three sections detail strategies fleets can use today to achieve these results.

Coaching At-Risk Drivers for Long-Term Success

Fleets have a limited set of training resources and must use them wisely. Therefore, they need to tailor their coaching to address each driver's specific risk behaviors. They must also ensure they are keeping drivers engaged throughout the training process.

Tailoring Coaching to Each Driver's Specific Needs

Generic training programs that employ a broad approach to driver training often fail to meet individual driver needs. Instead, fleets can tailor each professional development plan (PDP) to the driver receiving it. This approach has a number of benefits:



Efficient Allocation of Training Time

Putting a driver through a training plan that addresses a skill they don't need to improve can be a waste of time. It could also turn them off of their fleet's professional development in general. For these reasons, dedicating time to teaching already-known skills can lead to misallocated resources. An exception to this rule is continuous coaching plans.



Improved Learning Comprehension

It is important that fleets ensure their training plan's intended message is clearly communicated. Tailoring coaching to the behaviors that actually need to be addressed can help make sure no wires are getting crossed.

Tailoring Coaching to Each Driver's Specific Needs

While tailoring a driver's training plan has clear benefits, it may seem like a daunting task. Fortunately, there are three things fleets can do to properly tailor their drivers' training plans.

01

Understand Each Driver's Learning Type

Everyone has a learning style that best suits them. For some drivers, videos that clearly demonstrate safe behaviors are the most effective means of coaching. For others, videos can be boring and prevent learning uptake. If possible, fleets should try to identify a learning style that works for a majority of their drivers and use training that fits this mold.

02

Identify and Address Root Causes

Almost every driver understands that speeding is wrong, so when addressing a speed management issue, effective trainers will often ask "Since you know not to speed, why did you do it?" This simple question can help trainers identify the root causes of their driver's behavior. Discovering and addressing these root causes right away can save both trainers and drivers valuable time.

03

Focus On the Issues that Matter Most

The purpose of a targeted training plan is to address the specific issues a driver is having. Otherwise, fleets risk overwhelming a driver and turning them off from a fleet's training program in general. For this reason, fleets should focus their targeted training plans on specific issues they have identified as in need of corrective action.

Engaging Drivers Throughout the Training Process

Assigning a one-off video to a driver and expecting to see a change in their behavior can be unproductive. **Behavior change is a complicated, long-term endeavor.** Top fleets typically engage with drivers on an ongoing basis and continually reinforce the central message of their training.

High levels of engagement can also reduce a fleet's turnover. Across industries, research shows that engagement is important to retain workers. The [Corporate Leadership Council](#) found that **highly engaged employees are 87% less likely to leave their role than poorly engaged employees.** Though not all drivers are

employees, the same logic applies to owner-operators and other contractors who fleets want to maintain a long-term relationship with.

Given that the benefits of engaging drivers on professional development plans are clear, how can fleets best pursue this goal?

Conversation-Centered Training Plans

Simply alerting a driver that they need to watch a video often isn't enough. It can be more effective to build coaching conversations into driver training programs. Generally, one of the best ways to engage with a driver is to talk to them directly, as this can help trainers build a strong working relationship with the drivers they're coaching.

Employ a Rigorous Development Tracking Program

Many fleets would benefit from an organizational system to keep track of the training plans they have assigned to drivers. As an example, if a driver is on a plan to address issues with speeding, management might be in contact with them at least twice each week, with each discussion focusing on their speeding issue. Without a task management system in place to track these engagement events, some conversations could be missed, while others could be unnecessarily repeated.

Continuous Coaching for The Safest Drivers

While some drivers need less coaching than others, even the safest drivers benefit from consistent exposure to best practices. Besides keeping drivers off of development plans, there are a number of other benefits to this practice:



Reinforce Fleet Safety Culture

Fleets that regularly push out safety messages are able to continually remind drivers that safety should be important to them. These fleets' drivers are more likely to be conscious of their behavior on the road, which can improve their safety and performance.



Reduce Liability

Fleets expose themselves to liability when they fail to train drivers who are later involved in a crash. This is a good reason to ensure every driver is receiving some form of instruction. After a crash, fleets that continuously coach their drivers can reference documented evidence of their good-faith safety procedures.

With these benefits in mind, there are two types of training every driver should receive on a continuous basis.

Safe Behavior Reminders

Sending out monthly or quarterly reminders to every driver in a fleet is an effective way to ensure safety is top of mind. A safety newsletter or in-person meeting on safe driving skills can help drivers who may have gotten too comfortable behind the wheel remember what behaviors are keeping them safe.

Emergent Best Practices

As time goes on, recommendations for safe driving best practices change. **Safety managers should take it upon themselves to review materials from sources like [ATRI](#) on a regular basis** and to send recurring updates to drivers.

Coaching Driver Managers for Smooth Operations

A complete training program seeks to improve the behavior of a fleet's driver managers. The benefits to doing so are two-fold:

Reduce Turnover of a Manager's Team

[An analysis](#) of 45,000 Qualcomm messages between drivers and dispatchers found that **when dispatchers swear or are rude to drivers, it distracts them and negatively impacts their performance**. Improving driver-manager communications can lead to major turnover-related benefits, as almost every driver wants to enjoy a positive work environment and focus on their job.

Improve Overall Safety Culture

Safety culture starts at the top. Drivers are [more likely to believe](#) safety is an essential part of their job when fleet leadership demonstrates that they value it. Ensuring driver managers represent safe behaviors is crucial, because they are the front-line representatives of leadership to most drivers.

For these reasons, it's important fleets effectively execute their management development program. Fortunately, there are three straight-forward ways they can do so:

Executive Engagement During Management Training

Driver managers need to be bought into a fleet's culture and that process starts at the top. Senior management and executives at top-performing fleets often engage with their front-line managers regularly, pushing out weekly safety messages or holding monthly meetings. These tactics can help bring driver managers into a fleet's culture, which trickles down to their drivers.

Continuous Coaching for Managers

It is important to continuously coach driver managers. To do so, fleets can assign quarterly classes that focus on general management skills or safety procedures. Some fleets even utilize year-round coaching for their managers to ensure lessons learned are retrained. Systems like these can prevent driver managers from needing targeted intervention in the first place.

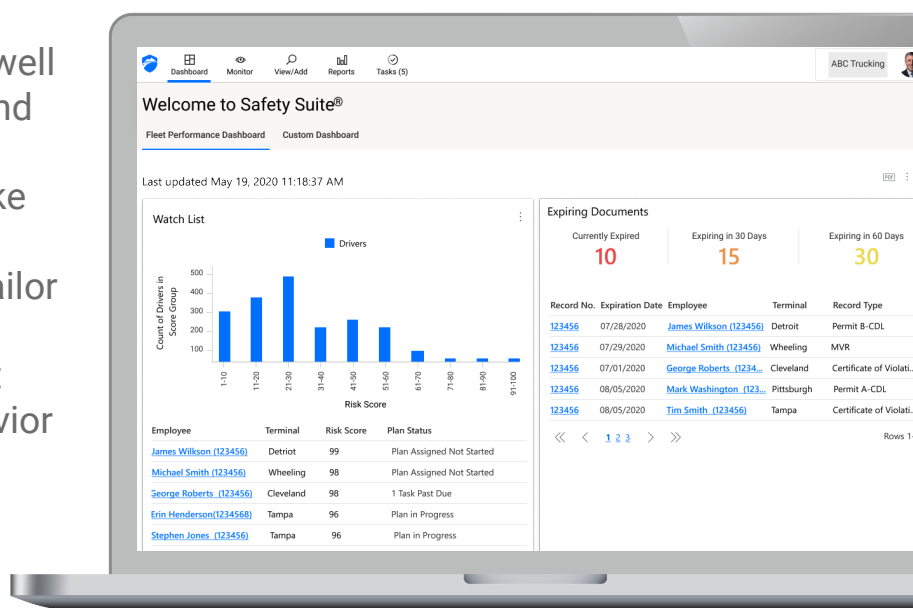
Align Management Incentives to Trained Behaviors

It's important that a driver manager's training is aligned with the incentives they face. Fleets like Western Express and PGT Trucking [have found success](#) benchmarking their driver managers on their team's turnover, revenue generated, and safety performance. Fleets can expect their management training program to yield positive results by **ensuring driver managers have an incentive to apply lessons learned in training to their day-to-day work**.

Conclusion

With crashes at 30-year highs, turnover well above 90% for certain fleet segments, and Nuclear Verdicts a worry for fleets of all sizes, it's important that every carrier take steps to evaluate their professional development program. Strategies that tailor training to each driver's needs, offer continuous coaching for even the safest drivers, and improve management behavior can help fleets during this difficult time.

Making these changes may seem challenging to do. Fortunately, implementing them can be easy with the right technology.



[The Idelic Safety Suite®](#) is the industry's leading driver management platform, helping fleets consolidate driver data from their third-party systems in a single location. **With Safety Suite, fleets of all sizes have implemented new training programs, revamped their safety culture, engaged with their drivers, and [reduced accidents by as much as 52%](#).**

With Safety Suite, fleets can:

- **Consolidate their driver data into a single platform**
- **Use AI to immediately know which drivers are at risk of a crash**
- **Seamlessly assign and monitor training without ever leaving the platform**
- **Consistently engage and retain their best drivers**
- **Evaluate driver manager performance to target training to those who need it most**

Watch a 2-minute demo video or sign up for a deep-dive on Safety Suite [here](#).



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