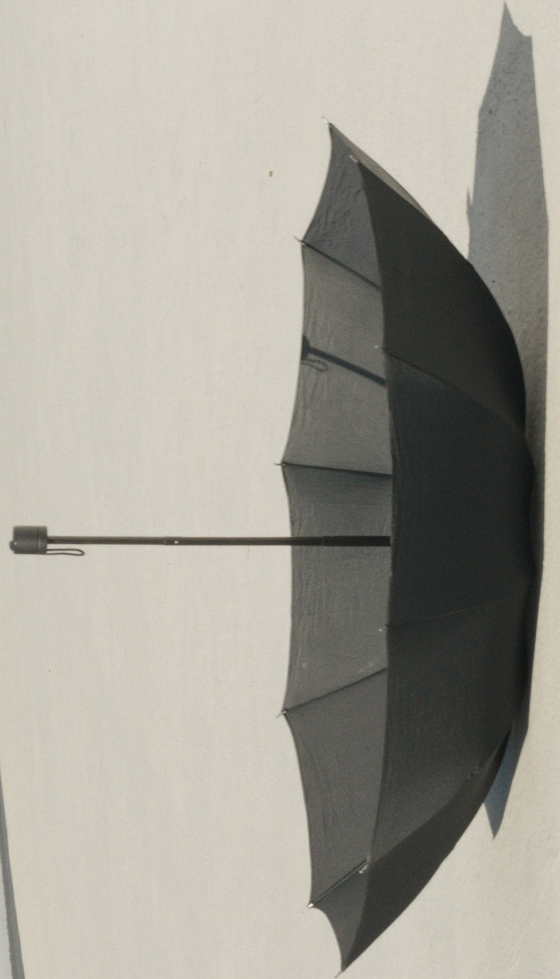


# Views from the **EDGE**

A COLLECTION OF TRUCKING,  
TECHNOLOGY, AND TRAINING  
COLUMNS FROM THE PAST YEAR



## FOREWARD

Last summer we produced our first *Views from the Edge*, compiling several of my LinkedIn columns from the previous year into a single ebook. I was a bit apprehensive at the time, since it felt pretentious to collect a bunch of my random musings and call them a “book”. However, it turns out that I needn’t have worried – the response was overwhelmingly positive. As a result, we’ve decided to do it again.

This edition of *Views from the Edge* collects columns originally published over the past year: highlights and trends from the Best Fleets to Drive For, some thoughts on how to make the most of online training tools, and a multipart series addressing some common myths about drivers.

Some of these you may have seen on LinkedIn or published in industry magazines already, and some may be completely new. Whatever the case, hopefully they provide some ideas, or maybe just a momentary distraction, as we continue to dig our way out of this pandemic.



Mark Murrell  
PRESIDENT

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# Business Management



# What It Takes To Be A Best Fleet

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 19, 2021

Two weeks ago we unveiled this year's [Top 20 Best Fleets to Drive For](#). The announcement was followed by the usual flurry of excited shares and congratulations among the winners, along with some disappointment from those who didn't make it.

Also included in that mix, unfortunately, were the equally expected sour grapes. These come every year in the form of “how did X make it? I heard they were terrible!” and similar messages expressing shock that some supposedly terrible company made the list. I’ve [written before](#) about how every company is great for some people and terrible for others, so these comments don’t irk me too much. No, the ones that really get to me every year are these:

“It’s fixed!”

“They just give it to the same people every year!”

“How much did they pay to get on the list?”

As if the hundreds of hours we spend interviewing, scoring, and compiling the data were completely pointless – we could just accept a bribe and save ourselves the hassle!

For what it’s worth, no one has yet offered a bribe to get on the list. We’ve had people threaten us when they didn’t make it or try to flirt their way in (which pretty quickly turned into overt harassment), but no one has bribed us.

No, money is not what it takes to be a Best Fleet. It takes more than that. The recipe for becoming a Best Fleet is not complicated, but it’s also not easy. For this column, I thought I’d share that recipe, explaining how fleets get on the list, and why some are there year after year.

To be a Best Fleet, you need three things – commitment, discipline, and collaboration. If you can get those three things right, you can get on the list and stay there for a long time.

**COMMITMENT.** Becoming a Best Fleet requires a commitment from the top of the company to do the things that make the workplace better for drivers. That seems easy enough on the surface, but demonstrating that commitment will absolutely mean making sacrifices and some of those sacrifices will impact revenue

and profitability. Without having company leadership 100% behind the efforts, they’re doomed to fail – things will be fine when the going is easy, but when it gets tough the ‘commitment’ will suddenly disappear. However, if company leadership is truly committed, and is demonstrating that through their actions, the fleet will be ready to do the work required to make it onto the list. Which brings me to...

**DISCIPLINE.** Getting onto the Best Fleets list is not easy and requires effort that spans multiple years. Fleets need to have the discipline to maintain that effort, continually look for ways to improve, and keep at it every day. It’s not something that can be done in a few weeks or even a few months. Some of these companies have been working on it for years. Through that process, there will be stretches where it looks like nothing is happening, or no progress is being made, but you still need to keep working. You need a lot of discipline to stay focused during those dark days, but for fleets who stick with it, the payoff comes eventually.

**COLLABORATION.** The commitment to build a great company may be led by a few people (or perhaps one person) at the top, but they can’t do it alone. The whole company needs to be engaged in the process in order to see results. Management needs to collaborate with front line employees, office staff need to collaborate with drivers. Everyone needs to be involved in identifying the opportunities for improvement, crafting a plan to address them, and seeing them through to completion.

As simple and basic as those three things may seem, the difference between fleets who make it into the Top 20 and those who don’t generally comes down to how thoroughly they’re executing on these principles. It’s also a big part of why some fleets are on the list year after year after year. When fleets do it well, it’s easy to see.

**Here are some examples of what that looks like.**

- Grand Island Express has been on the Top 20 list for 10 consecutive years now, and has won the overall award 3 times. Clearly, they have exceptional programs and have figured out how to keep their drivers happy. But every time we do an educational session at the TCA Convention (discussing trends and new ideas) their president is the first one in the room and sitting at the front ready to take notes. They also pour over the results book every year looking for new ideas and places where they may be able to improve in the future.
- Central Oregon Truck Company has been on the list for 8 consecutive years, and is also an overall award winner, but every year they order both their final report (which details their scores in different areas and includes the full driver survey data) and a consultation to review the report and discuss opportunities. Every year I tell them not to order the consultation because I'm not going to have anything useful to tell them, but every year they order it anyway, looking for ideas.



- Halvor Lines has 9 consecutive years on the list, but they also make a point of getting the report and consultation every year as well. They bring their whole management team to the consultation, and discuss new ideas and takeaways as a team before implementing.
- Garner Trucking, a 5-timer as of this year, spent a full year researching the program, talking to past winners, and getting their house in order before they even participated the first time.

Those are just a few examples, but there are many more. The simple fact is that the fleets who do well are the ones who are committed to improvement from the top down, demonstrate the discipline necessary to make lasting changes, and collaborate effectively to crowdsource ideas and keep everyone on the same page.

In some ways, it's like exercise and fitness. The things you need to do to look like you're in a Marvel movie aren't complicated, but they're really hard. However, anyone can do them, and anyone who does that work will see the benefits.

**If only it were as simple as a bribe!**



# Safety, Beyond the Truck

PUBLISHED ON FEBRUARY 11, 2021

“Safety comes first here”  
“We’re a safety-focused company”  
“Safety is at the heart of what we do”

I’ve heard these phrases enough times that they have become cliché. I know they’re coming from an honest place, and the people saying them have generally devoted a significant portion of their working life to improving safety in their respective workplaces, but they are still said so commonly, they have lost their power.

In general, the industry has done a great job of improving safety for drivers and other motorists on the road. Fleets outfit their trucks with the latest safety equipment, have solid training and performance management

programs, and these days also have dashcam-based coaching programs for continuous improvement.

That’s all great, but it’s only one part of the equation.

While the industry has done a great job of safety when the truck is moving, we see a lot less attention being paid to driver safety when the truck isn’t moving. That’s an area where many fleets still have blind spots.

To truly be safety-focused, a fleet needs to consider every aspect of the driver’s experience, from the time they report for work at the beginning of the week until they go home at the end. That includes everything that happens at the terminal, at customer sites, at truck stops, and everything in between. And that’s where you find the gaps.



As an example, in the Best Fleets program we ask companies what they do to protect drivers when the truck is parked. Fleets that scored max points this year had panic buttons on their ELDs, personal safety training, and support programs to ensure drivers don't find themselves in unsafe places. However, more than one third of respondents didn't have anything at all. It's not that they don't care about their drivers, it's just that they never thought about it.

When we're going through the Best Fleets evaluation process, almost everyone tells us that safety comes first, but they don't really need to. When drivers truly feel safe, the driver surveys reflect that. But we can also tell from each carrier's questionnaire whether safety truly comes first, and it has nothing to do with CSA scores or DOT reportable incidents. The evidence shows up in the responses to questions across all categories in the evaluation.

To get to the heart of what it really means to be a "safety first" fleet, there are two questions to consider:

- What happens when the truck isn't moving?
- Who else is thinking about and demonstrating a commitment to safety?

### When the Truck Isn't Moving

Keeping drivers safe when the truck isn't moving means thinking about their experience at shipper sites, making sure they have access to parking, and making sure they stay safe while parked. These are things that need to be considered by the whole company, not just the driver and safety manager, in order to be executed properly.

As an example, it floored me to learn that it's common for a truck key to open multiple vehicles.

As a non-trucker, I can't imagine having a car and not knowing how many other people had keys that would unlock it. The idea that a driver may be staying over-

night in a truck stop, and there could be any number of other people that have keys to that truck, strikes me as crazy. I get the practicality of it from a fleet perspective and the desire to avoid endlessly chasing down keys and making copies, but it's pretty hard to argue that driver safety is paramount when they're not even provided a secure space inside their own vehicle.

That's just one example, but there are plenty of other places where like this need to be considered. The fleets that do really well in this area have thought about the complete experience for a driver with their company:

- What it's like when drivers walk into the terminal (and, are they even allowed in the terminal)?
- What happens when their trucks need maintenance?
- How are they treated during pickups and deliveries?
- Where and how are they taking their off-duty time?

There are things that can address these questions to ensure the driver never needs to worry about personal safety. Most fleets have something for some of these (in-house maintenance, for instance) but it's often only covering some of the scenarios drivers encounter. To really cover the issue thoroughly, all of the scenarios need to be considered, and that relies on...

### Getting Everyone Involved

This is another place where most people have done some work but still have blind spots. It's also how we can tell if fleets really are committed to safety across the entire company.

A driver should almost never just "find" themselves in a bad situation. Every bad situation is a result of decisions that were made earlier, by a variety of people. The choice of freight to carry, the choice of equipment to carry it, the routing, the selection of fuel network

and parking along the way, the schedule for delivery, and even the matching of driver to fleet manager. All of those decisions contribute to the situation the driver is in, and companies can make decisions that make that situation more or less safe.

When they're focused on creating a safer total work experience, we can see it. It's evident in the questions about managing shipper relations, handling natural disasters, tracking home time, measuring manager performance, and this year it was definitely evident in the question about pandemic response. In a fleet that's truly focused on safety:

We see ops routinely routing drivers away from potential safety issues such as bad weather and other disruptions that could cause problems.

We see sales and customer service staff work closely and consistently with customers to improve the pickup and drop off experience, and holding them accountable when they don't.

We see maintenance making choices that improve the safety experience, even if they're more costly.

We see that the executive has defined a business strategy that encourages those departments to do those things and supports their decisions.

Most importantly, we see company leadership demonstrating a safety-focused approach to everything they're doing, whether or not it has anything to do with drivers. For those companies, it's as if management asks "what would the general public think if they saw us doing this?" and conducts themselves so there's always a positive response to that question.

Having seen many safety-focused people at industry events (back in the before-time when we could actually get together for industry events!) I've seen first-hand that they comport themselves the same way whether they're in front of drivers or attending a

social event. There's a reason why companies like Bison Transport, Grand Island Express, Boyle Transportation and others routinely make the Best Fleets Top 20 and win safety awards as well, and that top-to-bottom company commitment to providing a safe, positive workplace is certainly part of it.

Whether consciously or not, they know that optics matter and that if they're not modeling the behavior they want to see in others, it's going to be a lot harder to get everyone doing it. If they're telling drivers to be safe, the message is undercut if they then behave unsafely themselves.

On the other hand, if leadership does model safety-oriented behavior, and if all departments work together to demonstrate that they're thinking about it as well (demonstrate it, not just talk about it) then the message resonates much more deeply and the effects are felt across the whole organization.

Creating a truly safety-focused business is a lot more than just keeping people safe when they're driving, but when it's done right the effects are obvious and the results are clear. Drivers know it, and we know it when we go through the Best Fleets process. And that never gets old, no matter how many times I see it!





# Best Fleets 2021: Measuring Manager Performance

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON MARCH 23, 2021

“It’s a competitive world  
Everything counts in large amounts”

DEPECHE MODE

Every year when we get ready to score the Best Fleets, that song gets stuck in my head. If you’re a child of the ‘80s like me, you may have it stuck in your head now as well. I make no apologies for that ;-)

Scoring the Best Fleets finalists is a tricky job that only has a basic template for us to follow each year. We have an idea of what things we might score, but we never actually know what we can score until we look at the final set of data that’s been collected. We add new questions every year, and sometimes we want to score them, but we never know if there’s going to be enough to justify scoring until we see the full picture.



Balanced against that is the fact that if we're trying to score fleets on how much they improve the workplace experience for drivers, we should be scoring them on nearly everything they're doing. Pretty much everything a trucking company does affects the experience for a driver, so when we consider the things we can score each year Depeche Mode fades into my head and "everything counts in large amounts" starts looping.

Over the past few years we've been expanding the things we score to encompass some of the less obvious things, and this year there were a few more places where we did that. Some of those were definitely things that people weren't expecting us to ask about, but they all contribute to the experience for drivers so they're worth exploring.

### **Managing the Managers**

One of the newly-explored places this year was a question that looked at how fleets measure the performance of fleet managers. The driver / manager relationship may be the most important one in the company, since drivers deal with their manager more than anyone else. Getting it right can mean safer, more productive drivers, a healthier corporate culture, lower turnover, and a variety of other positives, so it's worth investing in.

In support of that, we asked whether fleets incorporate any driver-related metrics into the evaluation of their fleet managers. We didn't specify which metrics, we just asked if anything was considered. For those who were, including driver-related metrics, we looked at what those were and how they tied back to other elements of the job. The results were interesting.

Looking at the responses across all the finalists, the largest segment – 27% – didn't incorporate any driver-related metrics at all when evaluating fleet managers. That was a surprise. Given the maturity of driver performance management tools, with custom scorecards, granular metrics, and personalized data being delivered to custom mobile apps on a regular basis, we expected more of that to make its way into fleet manager evaluations.

Equally interesting was the second most common response. 16% of finalists were including a single driver-related metric: driver productivity. Different companies used different measurements – mile production, total revenue, % of available hours used – but it was all measuring driver productivity.

There's certainly nothing wrong with incorporating productivity into the measurement of manager performance, but it only tells part of the story. If a manager has drivers with high productivity, but also high turnover, poor maintenance habits and more safety issues, is that manager really performing better than their peers?

The top scoring fleets in this question measured managers on a variety of driver-related metrics, including performance, retention, and safety. A few also included home time success rates to ensure that managers were getting drivers home consistently. The most comprehensive also measured whether managers were keeping their drivers up to date with training assignments and coaching sessions as well. That's a very well-rounded evaluation of how effectively the manager is supporting their drivers and the results they're seeing from those efforts.



It's not uncommon to see such a wide range in responses when we first start asking a question. We'll be watching to see if that changes over the next few years, as fleets look for new ways to continue developing their teams.

### **Coaching the Managers**

A related question, one that we've been asking for a few years now, is about the professional development programs for front line managers and other staff supporting drivers. Recognizing that managers will only be as good as the tools and support provided, we look at what fleets do to help them build their leadership, organizational, and interpersonal skills, in addition to the job-specific expertise.

While larger fleets like Bison Transport and Challenger have the fully developed management training programs one would expect from fleets their size, we also see smaller fleets accomplishing the same goal with "internal customer service" training, or taking advantage of programs through industry associations. A few years ago, we noticed a wave of fleets using Crestcom management training, but that seems to have subsided over the past 2 years. We also continue to see fleets using personality profile tools to help match drivers and managers more effectively.

There are a variety of ways to help managers improve both their hard and soft skills, and those improvements spill over into the driver experience. It may seem odd that a program evaluating great workplaces for drivers would care so much about the professional development opportunities afforded to management, but those efforts have a direct effect on the experience for drivers so they can make a big difference.

As Depeche Mode said – everything counts in large amounts.



# When Data Misleads Us

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON APRIL 14, 2021

“When a measure becomes  
a target, it ceases  
to be a good measure”

~ Goodhart’s Law (as paraphrased by Marilyn Strathern)

I read an [excellent article](#) recently that highlighted the various ways that data and statistics betray us. Because the world is complex and full of subtle nuances, it turns out that when we try to boil that down to a finite set of numbers that are managed and controlled, we often set ourselves up to be deceived. The quote above is just one of the reasons why that happens – once we start trying to improve something that we’re measuring, those measurements become less and less reliable.

The reason behind that is a fairly simple one – people respond to incentives. It may not be obvious or even conscious, but it happens. In 2005, Freakonomics explained in great detail the different ways that this phenomenon has played out, but it continues to happen even when we're aware of it.

Personally, I saw this play out with the first job I had in the tech industry. I was working in Apple's tech support call center, and we were measured on the call volume and abandonment rate (the number of people who hung up before reaching an agent). The idea was to compensate based on the number of calls answered, and incent people to answer those calls in a timely fashion. The unintended consequence was that agents got very good at quickly prescribing a set of potential resolution steps, then sending customers off to try them with the instruction to call back if it didn't work. Lots of calls answered, low abandonment, but longer time to resolution, and not a great experience for the caller.

As we get more and more data points to measure things that are happening in the world, and as we attempt to use those data points to improve performance, it's important to understand the different ways that data can mislead us, and do what we can to prevent it.

## Avoiding Data Proxies

One way that data misleads us is when it's wrapped up in a proxy - an abstracted measurement system used in place of real data. Sometimes it's too complicated to get real numbers, or they're just not available at all, so proxies get created to try and make sense of what's going on and create some metrics that allow for comparisons.

The safety world is full of these. Most safety metrics that people talk about regularly – DOT reportable incidents, CSA scores, insurance loss ratios – are actually proxies that summarize or simplify more complex numbers in such a way that a third party (e.g., enforcement agencies, insurers) can rank and prioritize people. Those numbers, on their own, are pretty much meaningless.

They can be helpful in understanding relative performance, but they only tell a tiny portion of the story. If two fleets have the same DOT reportable number or insurance loss ratio, are they equally safe? Not necessarily.

They're also all lagging indicators, so they only summarize what happened in the past and not what's happening now. If those two fleets have matching numbers today because of what happened 3, 6, or even 12 months ago, what does that tell us about how safe they are today? Pretty much nothing.





In order to get meaningful data, and be able to act on it appropriately, it's important to bypass the proxies and measure the actual numbers. In the safety world, that means adding up the actual costs (both direct and indirect) in total dollars and as a percent of revenue. That provides something more useful, helping to identify the specific places where costs are happening (rather than having them summarized by the proxy). It also spells out pretty clearly the benefit of fixing the problems.

### Measuring **All** the Parts

The quote that opened this piece highlights the challenges that arise when you start trying to improve the numbers that you're measuring, and the false sense of security that can be created when complex issues are reduced to simple numbers. Our experience in the Best Fleets program has shown that the way to avoid that is to consider a broader set of metrics that identify and address the potential for unintended consequences.

As an example, [in my last article](#) I talked about how fleets measure manager performance and noted how many were focused solely on driver productivity. That opens up a range of potential problems for the fleet since there's no incentive to ensure drivers perform safely, show up with undamaged cargo, take care of the equipment, or have any satisfaction in the job. Plenty of people will say that those are table stakes, but if one thing is measured and others aren't, that one thing becomes the priority.

Similarly, the most common benchmarking we see for driver performance is average MPG. Benchmarking fuel performance, on the surface, looks like a fantastic idea since good fuel performance requires speed management and smooth driving, which help with safety as well. However, when used on its own, this is a great example of data that creates complacency. Time is a zero-sum game so if a driver is incented to spend more time in one area, they'll necessarily spend less somewhere else. If they're focused on driving more slowly and smoothly, what aren't they focusing on? What are

they sacrificing in order to have more time to get where they need to go? Is it trip planning? Vehicle inspection? Customer service? This is particularly an issue in situations where drivers are bonused for on time performance - they're incented to arrive on time, and to drive slowly to get there, but that can create dual pressures that lead to maintenance issues and higher turnover.

To be clear, I'm not saying that benchmarking fuel performance is a bad idea, and I'm certainly not saying that we shouldn't incent drivers to slow down and drive more smoothly. But we do need to recognize that those benchmarking and incentive programs can't operate alone or in isolation - they need to be part of a larger package that balances all the places where performance can improve.

Creating an effective safety management program for drivers means making sure that ALL the things that define an exceptional driver are measured, incented, and developed. That means not only tracking speed, hard brakes, lane changes, and other on-road performance metrics, but also measuring trip planning, inspections, cargo securement, general workplace safety, sharing of best practices, and continuous learning as well. We've seen some fleets go so far as tracking whether drivers keep the cab clean and sweep out the trailer when they're done.

### The Complex, Messy World of Data

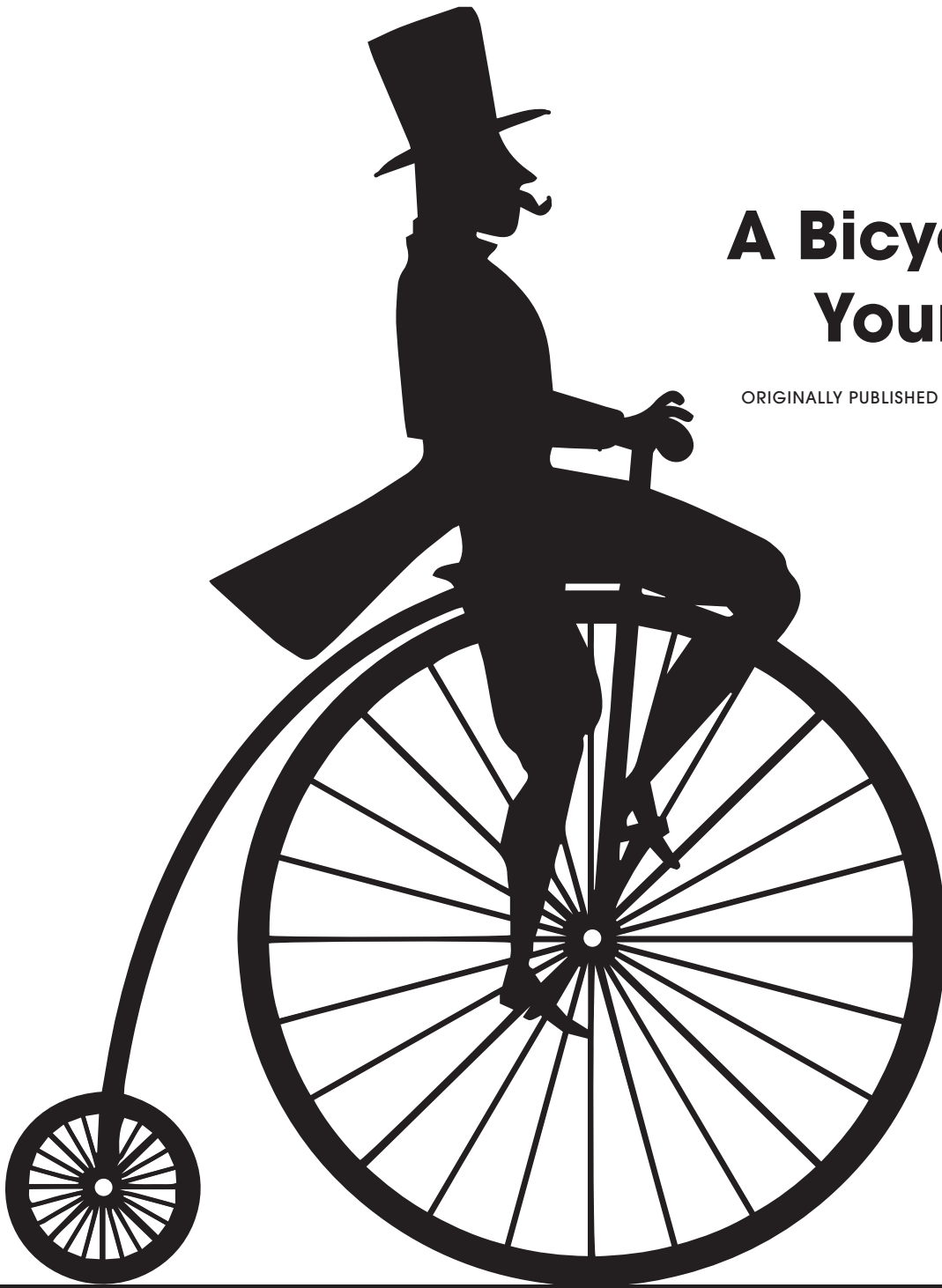
Putting all those pieces together, there are lots of data points available now, and more coming all the time. Much that was previously unknowable is getting tracked, reported, and benchmarked. All that is fantastic, and the foundation for making some dramatic improvements in safety, efficiency, and general quality of life for drivers. As long as we remember that the world is complex, data is messy, and it's easy to fall into complacency by relying on incomplete or overly simplified metrics.





# Training and **Development**





# A Bicycle for Your Mind

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 10, 2020

“A computer is like a bicycle for your mind”

This very old quote comes from Steve Jobs, way back in 1980. Back then, pre-iPhone, pre-Macintosh even, they were selling Apple II computers to schools and consumers. The analogy was a way to conceptualize what was then a new, unknown entity and get people to understand both the benefits and the expectations.



The comparison, as Jobs told the story at the time, originated with a scientific study that measured the efficiency of locomotion in different animals - how much energy they had to expend in order to get from point A to point B. Humans, as it turned out, didn't do very well compared to other species. We were about a third of the way down the list - not very impressive for the supposed pinnacle of the animal kingdom!

However, when that same study measured the efficiency of a human on a bicycle, we did MUCH better. We handily beat every other species in overall efficiency. Jobs used this point to highlight the fact that humans aren't naturally great in many areas, but are great at creating tools to overcome those limitations. The computer, he said, was another tool that gave us similar efficiency advantages to the bicycle.

This was a nice analogy, and very carefully crafted for the time. Computers in 1980 did open up a significant number of new capabilities, greatly reducing the effort required to do things, but they were still command-line driven so the user had to invest some effort to unlock those capabilities.

In other words, they were a lot like a bicycle: something that gets you from point A to point B more quickly, with greater efficiency, but still requires an investment of energy to do it. The upside of investing that effort is that you end up stronger and fitter than before, so you're better off all around.

With today's technology, that comparison doesn't really work anymore. Since you can get a ton of benefit with little or no effort required, computers are now closer to cars than bicycles.

However, it occurred to me that the analogy still works very nicely for another type of technology - an online training system. Much like the computer of 1980, an online training system is like a bicycle for your safety program. It opens up a world of new capabilities, but requires an investment of energy to get the full benefit. And the result of the invested energy is a greater fitness level overall. Let's look at why that is.

### **More Efficient Locomotion**

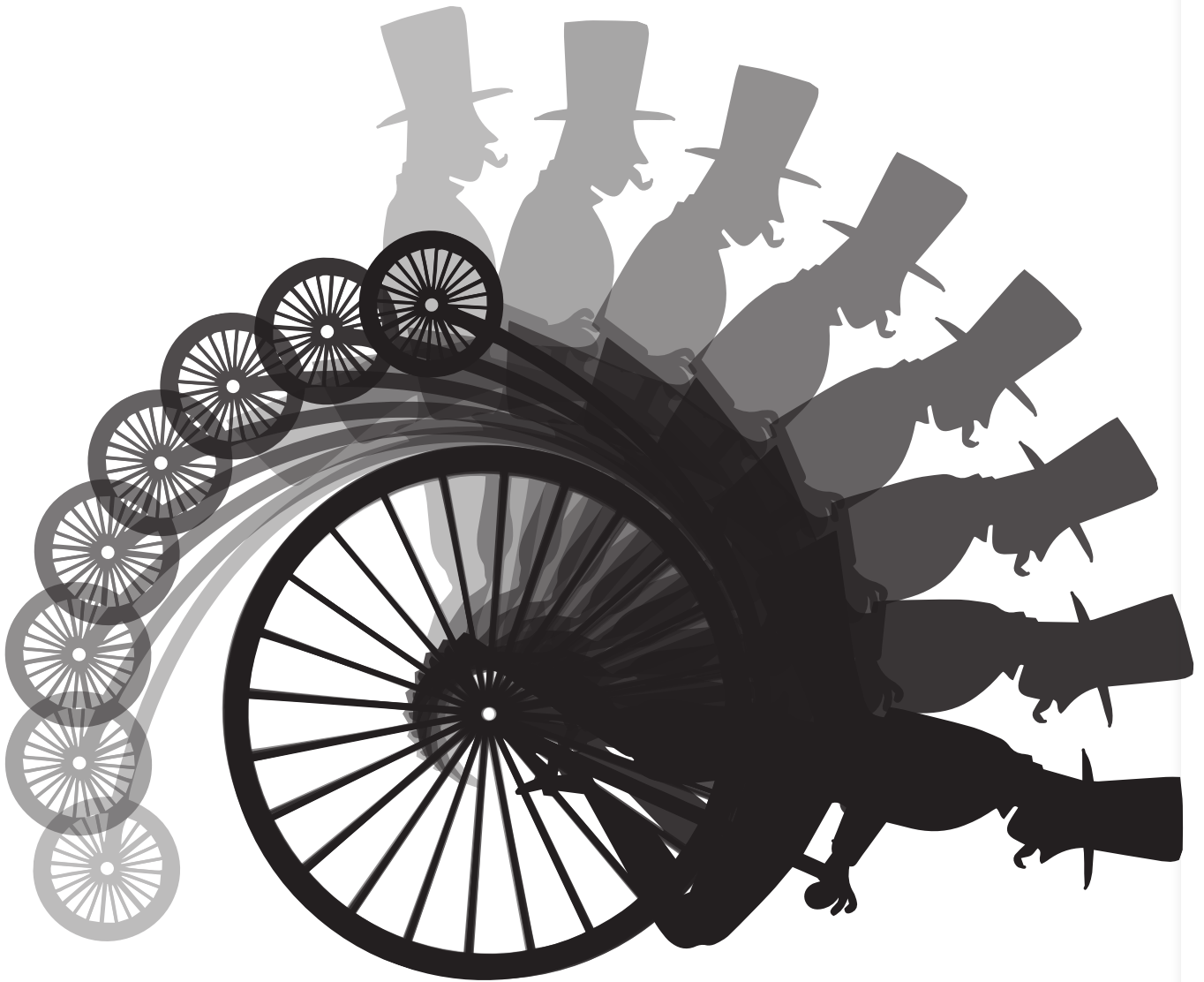
An online training system greatly increases the amount of training that can be delivered per unit of effort. Instead of relying on an instructor to deliver classroom content to small groups of people over an extended period, the online system can deliver content to everyone in a short period of time. If you're trying to train 1000 people in a classroom, it takes multiple instructors and many weeks (or months) to get it done. However, I've seen large corporate initiatives that trained 1000 or more people inside of a week with online tools, and without disrupting regular work schedules either. Exponentially more efficient.

### **Point A to Point B More Quickly**

As a result of the improved efficiency, online training helps companies improve their overall safety profile much more quickly. More training delivered to staff, with a broader range of subjects and better tracking of results, makes it easier to improve performance in key areas - whether that means better inspections, safer driving, better trip planning, improved fuel efficiency, or any number of other subjects. Whatever the end objective is, online helps you get their faster.

### **Investment of Energy is Required**

To make the most of that speed and efficiency, though, some effort needs to be invested. Yes, an online training system provides a library of courses and tracking of results out of the box, and that can start improving efficiency right away. However, that's kind of like a kids' bike with training wheels - it's better than walking but you're just scratching the surface of what's possible. To really unlock the opportunities available, you need to invest some time to customize and configure the online system to best fit your company's individual needs. Once it's up and running, you need to review the results and refine the program, act on the reports and data that are being collected, and take full advantage of the features. That's how you get rid of the training wheels and get moving at full speed.



### **Better Overall Fitness Level as a Result**

The upside of investing that effort is a greater overall “fitness” level for the safety program. If you’re customizing it to fit your specific company needs, it’s going to deliver better results each time you use it. If you review the data that’s being captured, you can identify trends and hard-to-see gaps that warrant further attention. If you follow up with users after they complete courses, you get better feedback on how to optimize the program. If you continue this train-monitor-review-adjust cycle you’ll see dramatically better safety and compliance numbers overall, all for the same investment of energy.

We often have fleets ask us if using online training will protect them in court cases, or if they’ll get a reduction in insurance premiums for signing up for the service. The short answer to those questions is always ‘no’. You

don’t get any immediate benefit or protection just from signing up for a service, anymore than owning a bicycle automatically makes you faster and fitter. However, if you put the effort in to build habits and continuous improvement processes around the training system, you can end up seeing some fantastic results that do positively influence insurance rates and provide strong legal protection.

That’s an effort that’s worth investing in, and a bicycle that’s worth riding.

So, to borrow another line from another wise man who left us too soon, Freddie Mercury...

“Get on your bikes and ride!”

# Classrooms Moved Online? Time to Step Up the Delivery Game!

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

Over the past 6 months, COVID-19 has forced many classroom training programs and presentations to move online. Zoom, WebEx, Skype, and Teams are now the de facto standard tools instead of whiteboards, flip charts and overhead projectors.

On the surface, the delivery should be the same - it's still a live session featuring slides and an instructor leading people through the content. The reality, of course, is quite different. As those in-person programs have moved online, facilitators have discovered that there are actually major differences between the two delivery methods. To deliver virtual training and presentations successfully, those differences need to be recognized and the special challenges of a virtual environment need to be addressed.



**Here are some things to consider to maximize the effectiveness of live online delivery.**

### **SOCIAL CUES**

In a physical classroom, there are social cues that participants pick up on during the event. If everyone else is paying rapt attention to the speaker, students will feel like they should as well. If others are zoning out, they're more likely to do it too.

In the context of a conference presentation or meeting, that can extend as far as determining whether or not people stay or leave the session. In a physical presentation at a conference, attendees may realize they're not interested in the content and want to leave, but they'll weigh that against the amount of disruption they'll cause by walking out. That's part of why a lot of people want to sit on the end of a row or take seats at the back, so they can make a hasty, quiet exit.

Online, however, none of the social factors exist. Even in virtual training sessions where the cameras are on, you still can't tell exactly what the other participants are doing all the time. With some virtual meeting tools you can't easily see the other participants when the instructor is talking, making it even tougher. That means participants can tune out more easily, do something else without it being obvious, or leave the session altogether. To prevent that, those virtual sessions need to be a lot more compelling.

### **COMPETITION FOR ATTENTION**

Added to the lack of social cues in a virtual session are the many other things competing for the participant's attention. In a physical classroom, it's assumed that the instructor can see each time a participant looks down at their phone or stops paying attention to the speaker. Online? Not so much.

Even with cameras on, it's impossible to know if the participant is looking at the presentation or something else. If they're typing, are they taking notes (which many people do as a way of learning the content) or are they sending messages to their friends? When they're not taking notes, are they paying attention to the speaker or surfing other sites?

Much like the social cues in a physical class that keep people paying attention, the physical immersion in a dedicated environment helps to keep people focused on the subject at hand and not distracted by other things. When they're away from that physical environment, sitting at their desk with all the various notifications popping up and the lure of easy access to activities that escape the eye of the instructor, it's a lot harder for people to stay focused on the speaker.

Putting these two points together - lack of immersion in the physical environment and lack of social cues driving behavior - and it's easy to see the added challenge virtual delivery faces. Without those elements to help out, the presentation itself - the speaker, the content, and the slides - need to do all the work to maintain the engagement level.

## **SPEAKER QUALITY**

Many instructors do the job because they know the content well and are comfortable talking to an audience. That's not the same as being a compelling speaker, engaging educator, or great curriculum designer. In a physical environment where everyone is together, you can get away with that. It's not great, but you can get away with it. Think of the many examples of 'instructors' (I'm using the word very loosely here) who stand at the front and either read the slides or just recite stories from their own experience.

Online, that doesn't work. Without the supports provided by physical attendance, a lacklustre delivery falls flat and loses the audience fast. Once you've done that, there's really no returning - the participants won't respect or pay attention to what you're saying.

To make online delivery work, instructors need to be able to speak comfortably at a consistent pace, with inflection and energy in their voice, and without endless umms and uhhs. It doesn't need to sound like an over-caffeinated radio DJ, but it does have to have pacing and life in the voice. More like a newscaster, delivering content in a way that the audience can follow, but also keeping them interested. Making the audience work a little bit to maintain their engagement, but not too hard. That requires speaking with a certain amount of polish - rising and falling pitch in the voice with no monotone sections, strong consonants so it's clear what's being said, and most of all... **NO READING OFF THE SLIDES.** I have a whole webinar that talks about how to create and deliver PowerPoint presentations effectively and this is pretty much rule number one for delivery.

The key to that kind of delivery is to rehearse it. If the slides are built today and the session delivered tomorrow, without any rehearsing in between, it will sound rough and clunky. Take some time to rehearse the content so you can deliver it without stumbling or sounding like you're rushing through it, and the effort will pay off. Even two run-throughs, going end to end without stopping, will make a big difference in the smoothness of delivery during the live session.

## **SLIDE CONTENT**

Building on the last point, the slides need to give people something to look at that isn't the script you're reading. It doesn't have to be a lot - it can be an image that illustrates your point, maybe the key points in bullet form - but it needs to be something for the audience to use as a mental bookmark for the content you're presenting. The subject of creating effective PowerPoint slides is a HUGE one, so I won't go into it in detail here (if you're interested, here's [my webinar](#) on the subject) but spend a bit of time thinking about what should and shouldn't be on those slides.

You also don't always have to rely on slides. Sometimes videos can work, and sometimes just cut the slides altogether and have your face on screen. That can be a great way to connect better with the audience, but it has its own set of challenges, which leads us to...

## **LIGHTS, CAMERA, SOUND**

This is an area I find endlessly fascinating, now that the entire world has moved to virtual meetings, classes, and interviews. Watching interview segments on news and infotainment shows, you see a wide variety of camera positions, lighting setups, and audio quality, all making a much bigger difference on the final product than the speakers appear to realize.

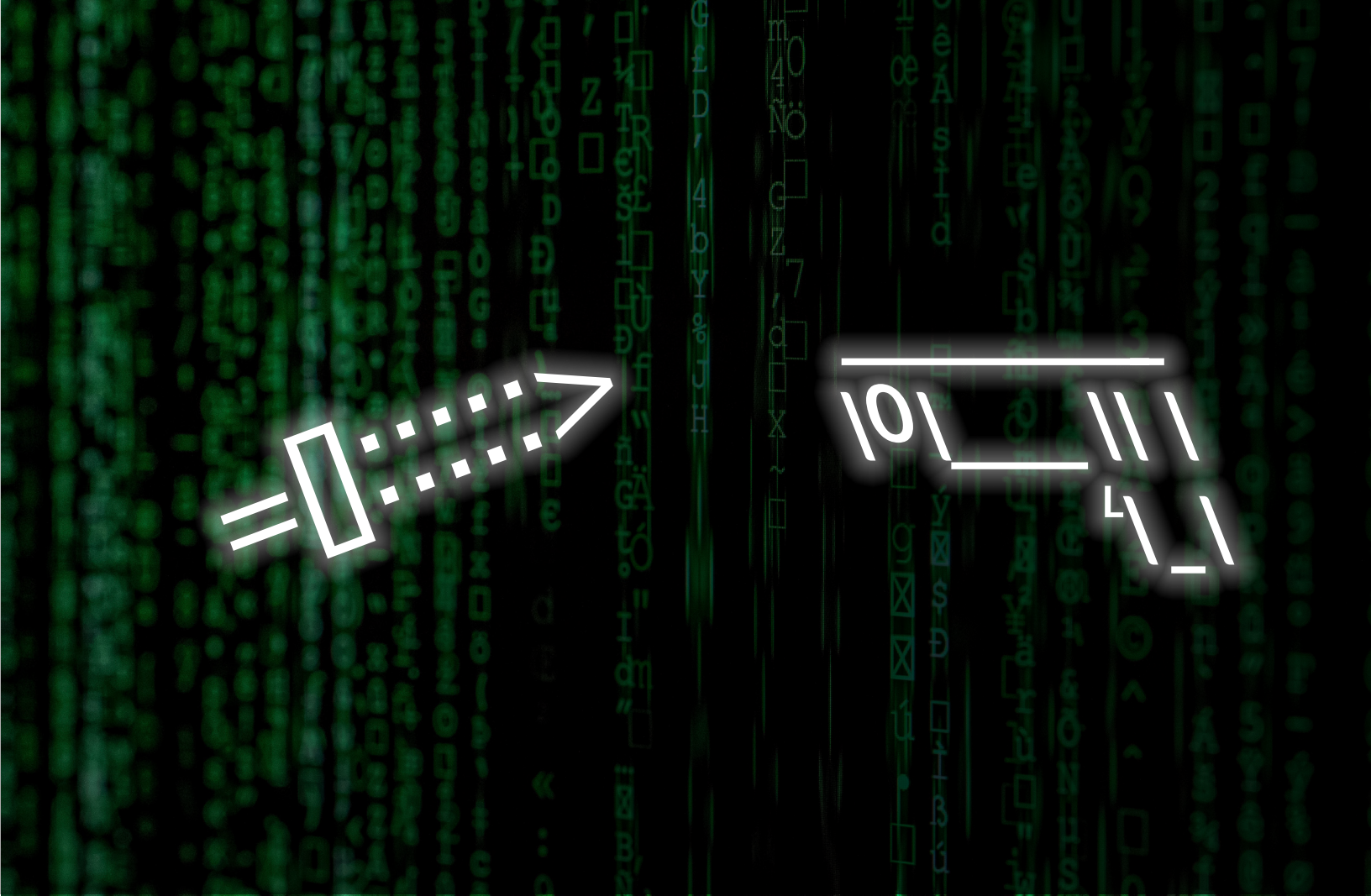
**To do it right, there are some simple steps that anyone can follow:**

- If at all possible, have the camera at or slightly above eye level. No one wants to look up your nose, but the camera shouldn't be too high above your head either (it's not a selfie).
- If you're sitting down, position yourself close enough to the camera that you're visible from the chest up. If you're too close it can look like a disembodied head on screen, and if you're too far it will pick up too much hand movement that can be distracting for the audience.
- Adjust the lighting to minimize shadows. There are standardized lighting setups that professionals use ([examples here](#)) and you can mimic that pretty well with just a couple of lamps and selective use of curtains or blinds to control natural light.
- Use wireless headphones/mic or the kind of in-ear phones/mic that typically come with mobile phones. If you use a large over-the-ear headset you look like you're directing air traffic. If you rely on the computer's built in audio you'll invariably get tons of background noise and poor quality audio. Mobile phone headsets are surprisingly good at providing clean audio, so there's no reason not to use them.

Put those things together and you'll be surprised at how much better the picture and audio quality of the presentation is. Add in the points above to create more engaging slides and deliver in a cleaner, smoother fashion, and you'll be amazed at how much better the finished product looks.

Delivering live training and presentations online may be a new adventure for many people, but it's not rocket science so anyone can do it well, with a little preparation and practice.

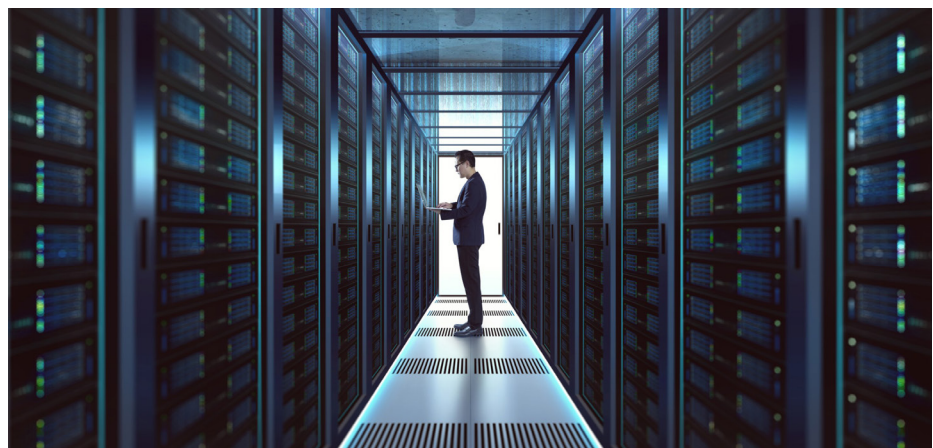




# The Data Gap: Bringing a Knife to a Gunfight

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON DECEMBER 1, 2020

We live in a world defined by data. Everywhere you turn these days, you see stories about AI, machine learning, algorithms, big data, real-time analytics, and more. The image of the modern corporate enterprise is something like this...



That's been a growing trend for nearly a decade now, and it's been getting increasing media attention ever since the infamous story of [Target's algorithm determining which of its customers were pregnant](#) back in 2012. In the past few years the march of technology has entered the trucking industry as well, with a sudden influx of vendors offering products powered by big data and machine learning. ECMs, ELDs, trailer sensors, and a variety of other internet-of-things devices collect a lot of data, and the prevalence of good mobile service makes it easy for that data to be saved to the cloud (another term that's become commonplace in the past few years). As a result, there's a lot of information being compiled, and an ever-increasing variety of ways to parse, analyze, and act on the insights being revealed by that data. In the battle to improve safety and operating efficiency, the trucking industry has increasingly powerful weapons.

Except in one area of the business.

That place is the safety department. Or, more specifically, the tracking of driver training within the safety department.

That part of the fleet hasn't yet seen this massive technological shift. Instead, it's still using many of the same tools it was using 20 years (or longer) ago.

As someone who spends a lot of time talking to trucking companies, and exploring their different programs through Best Fleets to Drive For, it always surprises me when I see that contrast. Fleets may have all the latest tech on their trucks and many modern systems to assist with safety and analyze the data, but in this one area very few have changed their processes in the past decades. That always fascinates me.

## Driver Training Today

Today's driver training departments regularly use a range of different tools to deliver content (classroom, online, simulators) but the tracking of that activity still routinely relies on paper. Some fleets are more diligent than others when documenting the individual activities, but most of that documentation is still done through paper files. For example:

- Drivers attend a training session or safety meeting with a sign-in sheet to prove they were there
- In-cab trainers using a paper checklist to itemize the skills demonstrated during the road test
- Drivers sign acknowledgements to confirm they completed assigned activities

All of these are then commonly stored in a "driver file" in a physical filing cabinet somewhere in the terminal. If there are multiple terminals, they may each have a filing cabinet with files for their specific drivers.

In some cases, I do see attendance at meetings and completion of simulator sessions saved in an Excel file, but that's uncommon. When Excel is used, the file is often kept on one specific PC so it's not much different from a paper file in a physical cabinet.

(I fully recognize that many of our partners in the insurance world are still trying to get some of their fleets even up to this level, but that just underscores how vast the chasm is between what's happening with driver training and what's happening elsewhere in the business.)

This kind of activity tracking has many, many deficiencies.



## Problems with Paper

The most obvious problem with paper is that it's fragile and unreliable. It's easy to lose or misfile, and easily damaged by water or fire. It can't easily be shared, unless it's copied or scanned (which is also rare) so you need to have the physical item to get the value out of it. If there are multiple terminals then paper files could be spread across the country with no easy way to consolidate them.

Even when the files are present and readable, they're often little help. How much does a signature on a sign-in sheet really tell you about someone's experience at an event? Did they stay for the whole thing? Did they learn anything? Can you demonstrate they learned what they were supposed to?

Even things tracked in Excel have challenges since it's so easy to edit (intentionally or unintentionally) at any time.

For anyone who's had to prepare for an audit, paper files are no friend. Compiling, organizing, and keeping track of them to ensure they're returned to the right place afterwards can be a huge, time-consuming headache. Preparing for a court case is even worse.

All of those are well-known weaknesses of paper-based tracking, but there's another huge gap that people rarely think about, and it's one of that really highlights how antiquated this approach is – it doesn't support continuous improvement.

If all the data is captured in paper files, it's nearly impossible to do any kind of analysis on it. You can't look at the driver training program as a whole and see where it's working and where it needs to improve. You can't easily see the areas where students need additional support, the areas that can be shortened, or the things that can be cut completely. You can't see which instructors are performing best and which ones need help. You can't correlate training activities to on-road performance because there's effectively no actionable data being collected on the training.

In today's world, that's a huge gap. All that data is being collected in other areas of the business. Fleets can see in fine detail which drivers have the best fuel efficiency, speed management, lane keeping, braking habits, and plenty more. They can combine different data points to create risk profiles for drivers, allowing them to focus trainer efforts where it can be most effective. They can see where all their equipment is at any given time and analyze patterns to improve efficiency.

Against all that, tracking training activity with a stack of papers is bringing a knife to a gunfight.

## Digging into Training Data

There are, however, some better options. There are ways to capture that data in online systems and use it to help improve the driver development program and overall risk profile of the fleet. We've been working on adding activity tracking and data analysis tools into our system for a few years now, and some of our partners have added similar features as well. Here are some ways to start using those tools to capture more training data online, and make good use of it afterwards.

## Standardized Testing

For classroom events like orientation or quarterly meetings, have a standardized online test at the end to validate that the learning objectives were met. The test doesn't have to be long, but it does need to test the material covered during the session. The best ones I've seen require people to look up answers in their driver handbooks or reference guides, providing some extra engagement. There are some immediate benefits to doing this:

- It shows you exactly how much people understand from the session and who may need more help
- It lets you measure how well you're delivering the content (if everyone gets the same questions wrong, maybe the content needs revisiting)
- If you have multiple instructors delivering the content (and all students take the same online test), it makes it easy to see which ones are most effective and which ones need coaching

## Tracking of Classroom and Practical Activities

Classroom and practical training can be tracked online as well, so students can be tied to events which are then tied to specific instructors. With even basic registration management, you can easily quantify which drivers are most diligent about attending and which aren't. Much like the standardized tests, you can also track results by instructor to see who's having the best effect on students. Uploading road test checklists provides the supporting evidence of the road test, and allows you to see what was done each time.

With all of it online, it's available from anywhere needed, and you never need to worry about lost files. Some additional benefits:

- It puts all training related activities in one place. Classroom, practical, and online are all part of the same driver profile, removing the need to hunt for and download files from multiple sources.
- It lets you more easily see what the training program really looks like from the driver's perspective. When data is captured in different systems, it's hard to get a real picture of what drivers are actually doing. When it's all in one place, fewer things get missed.

Those are two simple ways to get started, but even doing those opens up a bunch of opportunities. More data to analyze, more insights into program effectiveness, and more ability to tie that into performance from other systems for an even clearer picture of what's happening in the fleet.

When it's time for an audit, both of the options make life much easier. Generating reports from an online system in advance of the audit, or creating reports dynamically while it's happening, is much easier than spending days compiling paper files. It also tells a much better story if you ever find yourself in court and need to show what you did, when, and how well it was tracked.

Other parts of the fleet, and even other safety programs, have benefitted greatly from online systems. You can track and analyze data continuously. Driver training doesn't have to be left out of that. It's time to put away the knife and pull out the pistol.



# Driver **Myths**





# What if we train our drivers and they leave?

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON MAY 4, 2021

*I'm working on a series of articles that reviews the assumptions and myths about drivers and how damaging they can be. As part of the research for that, I came across this article. It was originally published a little over 5 years ago, but since it's still applicable today I thought it would serve as a good opening for the series.*

Ah yes, that old chestnut that rears its head every once in a while to annoy me! I know I'm not alone in this – every service provider in the risk management business has heard it at some point as well, and we all hate it.

The conventional, witty-but-thought-provoking response is “what if you don’t train them and they stay?” but I don’t like that much better.

There are a bunch of reasons why both the question and the witty response get under my skin, so I thought I’d use this space to go through them. I hope you never get asked this question, but if you do maybe some of these will help.

### **Reason #1: Both the initial question and the response are patronizing to drivers**

The assumption that drivers are going to suck up all this great expensive training then immediately bolt to another company demonstrates a pretty low opinion of drivers. The response, suggesting that drivers who don’t receive training are bozos who will just ruin the company, shows an equally low opinion.

### **Reason #2: Why would they leave?**

The question is worded to suggest that drivers aren’t already leaving, and there will be a flood of exits after implementing training programs. But if you provide a good workplace experience and invest in continued professional development for your staff, why would that increase the number of exits?

### **Reason #3: Your drivers are leaving already**

As noted above, the wording of the question suggests that drivers will start leaving after this training investment is made. However, my experience has been that the fleet execs who ask questions like this generally aren’t focused on providing a great workplace, and they have high turnover already. Investing in training isn’t going to magically fix that (good people don’t stick around bad workplaces) but it’s a start. Drivers may still quit, but if you’re investing in them (and treating them decently) they’ll likely be quitting in smaller numbers.

### **Reason #4: So what if they do?**

If a few drivers might leave after you invest in training, does that mean you shouldn’t do it? That seems like a pretty poor foundation for decision making. It would be much more productive to look at the larger picture and decide whether the decision is right for the business over the long term rather than worrying about a few minor impediments that might come up.

### **Reason #5: Do you really want those drivers who quit?**

If you provide a good workplace experience and invest in the continued growth of your staff, and people leave anyway, maybe the problem isn’t you. There are some people who just aren’t a good fit and won’t be happy no matter what you do, so if those people leave then your business is likely better off as a result.

### **Reason #6: Do you ask that question about anything else?**

Replace ‘training’ in the question with any other business investment and you immediately see how ridiculous it is – “what if we invest in good trucks and drivers leave?” “What if we improve our shop and people leave?” “What if we raise our pay rates and people leave?” That kind of second guessing rarely happens outside of training investments, so it shouldn’t happen here either.

### **Reason #7: Do you really think you can build a successful business without investing in your people?**

In any service business, you need to continually invest in improving the quality and efficiency of your offering in order to have a shot at success. Your competitors are making those investments right now, so if you’re not investing at least as much, you’re falling behind and they’re going to crush you.

So, to summarize all that, and try to put it more positively, I guess my answer to the question is...

“Don’t worry about it. Invest in building a better workforce for the long term and trust your good drivers to recognize that investment and stick with you.”

...which is exactly what good fleets are already doing.

Of course, if you work for a company where execs ask questions like this with any kind of frequency, you should probably start looking for an exit. That kind of short-term thinking will ultimately kill the business, so you’re best to get out while you can.



# Drivers Don't Want Training

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON MAY 26, 2021

The idea that drivers don't want training seems to be pretty well cemented in the minds of many safety people.





When I'm talking to fleet safety or risk management people, it often comes up almost as a base assumption – drivers don't want to do training so you have to find some way to coax or coerce them into it. That base assumption hasn't really changed in the past decade or so. What fascinates me about that is that the reality of the situation is very different, and it also hasn't really changed in the past decade either.

The reality is that the vast majority of drivers do want training, and value having opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills in the workplace. Our data from the Best Fleets to Drive For program backs that up. Ever since the program started, we've asked drivers whether they agree that ongoing training is important, and every year they overwhelmingly agree. In fact, we've never had less than 90% of respondents agree that it's important for them to continue learning, and they regularly add supporting comments as well.

So, if the vast majority of drivers do want ongoing training, and that's been consistent for over a decade now, then why do fleets assume that they don't? Why has "drivers don't want training" become such an accepted truth that fleets rarely question the assumption?

Digging into the issue, it appears to be a case of misinterpreting the data, failing to investigate why the data is what it is, and drawing the wrong conclusions as a result (another example of what I wrote about in a [previous column](#)).

There are definitely training-related things that drivers don't want, and it's easy for fleets to generalize that into an assumption that they don't want training at all. However, that generalization creates a blind spot which can lead to problems for the fleet down the road. To prevent that, it's important to understand the specifics of what drivers do and don't want, and what can be done about it.

## Deciphering Driver Interests

First, if drivers are complaining about attending training, or are slow to complete assignments, it doesn't necessarily mean that they're uninterested in training as a whole. It just means they're uninterested in the training being offered. Yes, drivers are typically not excited about having to give up part of their weekend to drive to the terminal and sit through a poorly organized, poorly delivered classroom session. That doesn't mean they're not interested in learning more about the thing they spend all their days doing. Rather than assuming the issue is with the drivers (lack of motivation, disinterest in learning), it's more useful to consider why they might not be interested.

Drivers are typically uninterested in participating when they feel like they're the ones putting in all the effort. They feel like they're putting in all the effort when:

- They have to give up part of their weekend for a "driver meeting" that they don't get paid for (or get paid in sandwiches or reward points).
- The training is passive (non-interactive reading or videos), and they have to force themselves to pay attention.
- The content is outdated, or just regurgitates regulations and they're forced to figure out for themselves how it applies to them and their job
- Too much is assigned with too little time to complete it, creating more stress that they don't need
- The training is characterized as 'corrective action' or some other phrase that makes it sound like punishment
- The program is rolled out in such a way that it suggests it's another chore for them to complete



In the consulting world, the phrase “tossing it over the fence” describes someone dumping work on others without doing a sufficient portion of it themselves or considering the implications for the recipient. Any time training looks like something being tossed over the fence, drivers see that and lose interest. In those cases, it comes off as the company trying to cover its butt rather than an investment in their future, and they lose interest fast.

While drivers are uniformly unexcited by those kinds of training programs, those same drivers still overwhelmingly want to learn new things. I’ve numerous examples of this in the Best Fleets program, where fleets have training programs that sound completely horrifying, but a large majority of their drivers still want more opportunities to learn.

In short, drivers aren’t against training, they’re against bad training.

They’re against things that don’t obviously help them, that waste their time, and add more to their already-busy schedules.

Once we understand what it is they’re not interested in, it becomes much easier to craft a program that does interest them.

Following on the points above, they want a program where it’s clear that the company has invested as much care and effort as it expects them to invest. That means:

- Content that is up to date and directly relevant to their work
- Content that keeps them engaged and fits their learning style
- Organization and pacing that they have some control over (so they’re not forced to review things they already know and can spend time on the areas they need)

- Training that fits into their schedule, either delivered to them online or when they’re at the terminal already
- Programs that include follow-up after the fact to ensure effectiveness
- Programs that connect to other activities in the company holistically
- Programs that compensate them for their time

### **Believing the Myth Leads to Risk**

None of those points are monumentally difficult or expensive to implement, but they do require some time and planning. That planning won’t happen, though, if the feeling inside the company is that drivers don’t want training in the first place. Misinterpreting driver feelings about training creates a bias against training over time, leading to underinvestment in training programs or excess time spent trying to coerce people into completing them. That time would be better spent revisiting why the current programs are generating the responses they are and redesigning them for a better outcome.

After all, with constant regulatory updates, new and improved technology, shifting traffic and business patterns, and evolving best practices, keeping drivers up to date is critical. As the industry becomes more competitive – including the battle for the best drivers and best insurance premiums alongside the battle for the best freight and pricing – a modern, balanced, well-constructed professional development program for drivers is a powerful and necessary weapon in the arsenal.

And after 10+ years of getting the same survey responses from drivers, we know that’s definitely not a myth.





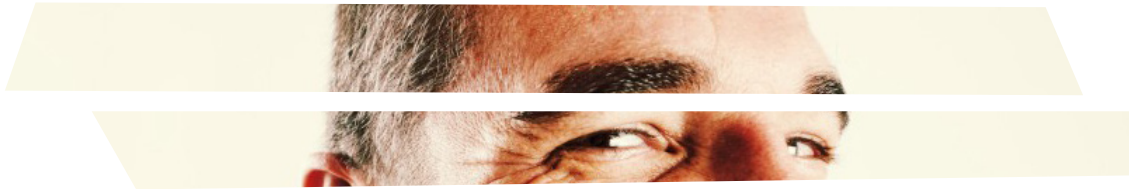
# How do we know they took the training?

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON JUNE 18, 2021

*As a continuation of past articles looking at some myths related to driver training ([here](#) and [here](#)), and the problems that arise as a result, let's consider the issue of whether drivers can and should be trusted.*

Like the questions featured in the other articles in this series, this one comes up occasionally when people are evaluating our online training service, and often says more about the person asking it than the drivers at the heart of it. Let's look at why the question isn't helpful and what to do about it.

First, I should clarify that the question isn't asking how we track progress and completion in our courses. It's asking how we can be sure that Driver A was actually the person logged in to Driver A's account to complete the assignment, instead of getting someone else to do it for them.



### **Lack of Trust**

This question tells us a lot about the person asking it because we immediately know that they don't trust their drivers. When discussing the prospect of delivering training remotely to maximize the convenience and effectiveness of the programs, the questioner jumps to the assumption that if they weren't being watched then drivers en masse would get someone else to do it for them (most commonly suggesting their kids as co-conspirators). I always find it interesting that they go there, and a bunch of questions immediately spring to mind in response:

- Why do you assume they won't do it themselves? Why don't you trust them?
- Is it normal for your drivers to cheat like that?
- Do you regularly have drivers getting others to do their work for them?
- If so, how do you know they're actually driving the truck?
- If you can't trust them to take an online course, why are you letting them drive that expensive truck filled with expensive cargo?
- Do you have a lot of cheaters and dishonest people working at your company? If so, shouldn't you focus on solving that problem?

Considering how to make the most of new programs is certainly fine, but if the base assumption is that drivers are going to cheat, it leads to other decisions that make things much worse.

### **The Solution Creates More Problems**

When fleets assume that they can't trust their drivers to do online courses, they typically explore a few ways to prevent misuse.

I've seen some fleets implement a kind of declaration when drivers log in or start a course, making them check a box to acknowledge they are who they say they are. That never works – anyone who's going to cheat won't have a problem checking a box (if they even bother to read it) so it's really just an extra hurdle for honest people to deal with.

Sometimes they make drivers do the courses at the terminal, on a public PC, where office staff can watch over them and ensure they do it. That's not much better, since it defeats the purpose of online learning (access anywhere, anytime) and treats drivers like children who need constant supervision.

Even for fleets who don't go to those extremes, the lack of trust can limit the effectiveness of the program. Rather than letting drivers proceed through the content at their own pace, non-trusting fleets often implement what's known as "navigation lockdown", forcing drivers to listen to all the narration and click every link before moving on. That removes another benefit of online learning (flexibility to customize the learning path), minimizing the effectiveness and irritating them when they have to sit through things they don't really need. It also sends a clear message that the company has no faith in their ability to self-regulate.

Those things can be irritants that hamper the program, but it's the long-term effect of that lack of trust that's

most damaging. If the company demonstrates a lack of trust in its training programs, it's likely demonstrating it elsewhere as well and sending a clear, consistent message that it doesn't trust its workers. Good people don't stick around a company that treats them like children instead of trusting them to do their jobs. The people who do stick around will see their performance drop over time – inspections, paperwork, customer service, and various other aspects of the job will diminish as they feel less and less valued.

Good people leave and those who stay underperform. Not exactly a recipe for success.

### **A Better Approach**

However, there is a more effective and positive way to approach the situation, creating a much better outcome over time.

Going back to the question at the top and how you know people did the training: the honest answer is that you don't know for sure who did the training. However, if you implement it the right way, that won't be a problem.

Implementing it the right way is critical, but fortunately it's also not that hard.

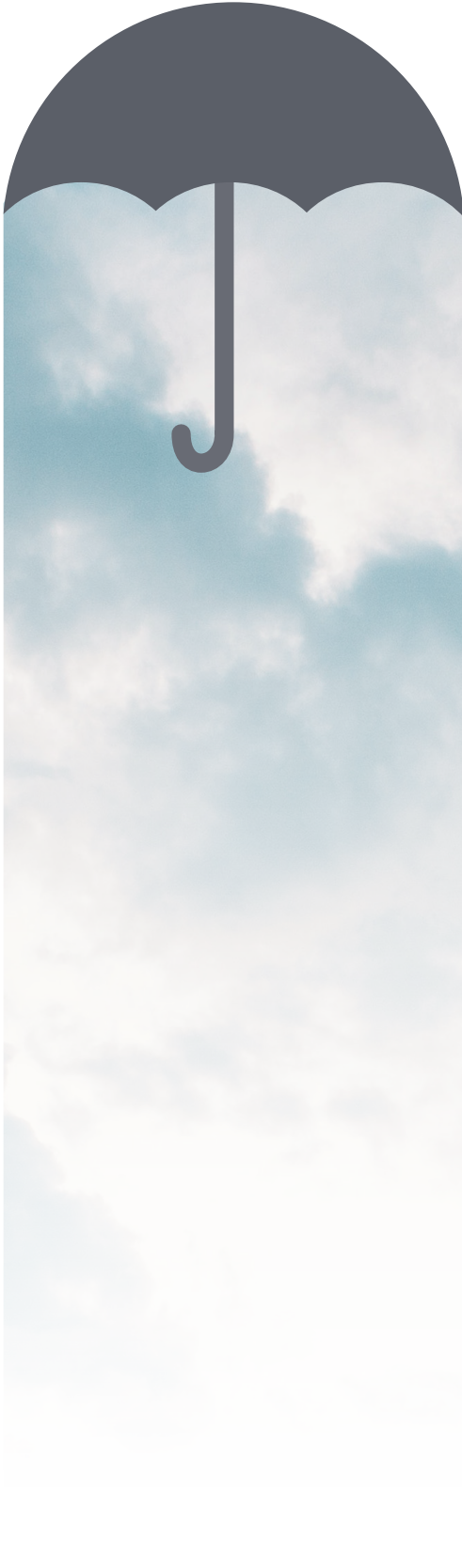
First, the training needs to be positioned properly, so drivers see it as an investment in their future and a way to help them do their jobs better. Not “corrective action” (a phrase I absolutely HATE) and not anything else that suggests it's a chore or punishment. If it's an investment in them, then they're more likely to get on board. I've posted many articles on that over the years, so I won't go into the details here, but make it a positive experience and they'll be interested.

Second, it needs to be scheduled in such a way that it doesn't add to their stress. This builds on some points in the [previous column](#), but if too much is assigned with too short a deadline, it doesn't work. Heavy assignments give them one more thing to worry about finishing, as well as taking away their opportunity to think about the content and consider how to integrate it into their work. Lighten the load, extend the schedule, and better results will come.

Third, follow-up after they complete it and discuss it with them. That discussion gives them a chance to interact with the content in a different way (talking about it), so it helps ingrain the material and make it part of their normal workflow. It also offers an easy opportunity to confirm that they actually did complete it themselves (it usually takes less than 2 minutes before it's clear that someone's faking it or lying about what they did).


To be clear, I'm not suggesting fleets should blindly trust their drivers and leave it at that. “Trust but verify” definitely applies, so it's important to find ways to prevent cheating while also minimizing the intrusions or babysitting for the honest people. The steps above do that - positioning it as something that's valuable for them, giving them ample time to embrace and complete it, and discussing it afterwards to (gently) confirm they did it.


For the most part, drivers have to be honest people that are trusted to do a job. They're given an expensive truck filled with very expensive or very dangerous cargo and tasked with driving across the city or across the country, dealing with unknowns all along the way. If that's the foundation of the relationship, and online training is rolled out in a way that reflects that trust, then there are rarely issues with people cheating.




APPENDIX A

While this compilation is focused on sharing more general topics, several other columns have been published in the past year with more specific topics. Those include:

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**Best Fleets 2021:  
The Year in Review**  
BY MARK MURRELL  
PUBLISHED MAR 2, 2021
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**What We Learn  
Before the Best Fleets  
Interview Even Starts**  
BY MARK MURRELL  
PUBLISHED OCT 22, 2020
- 

**What Privilege  
Looks Like**  
BY MARK MURRELL  
PUBLISHED NOV 11, 2020

## APPENDIX B

Here are the articles referred to throughout the compilation:

### **WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A BEST FLEET**

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A Great Job – But  
Not For Everyone

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## ABOUT



CarriersEdge is a leading provider of online driver training for the trucking industry. With a comprehensive library of safety and compliance courses, supported by advanced management and reporting functions, CarriersEdge helps over 2000 fleets train their drivers without sacrificing miles or requiring people to come in on weekends.



CarriersEdge is also the creator of the Best Fleets to Drive For program, an annual evaluation of the best workplaces in the North American trucking industry, produced in partnership with Truckload Carriers Association.



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