

Onboard technology an essential truck f

Technology and commercial truck fleet management have become virtually inseparable, for good reason — technology allows truck drivers to be more efficient and fleet managers to better manage their fleet's performance.

"In today's increasingly complex transportation and logistics industry, fleet managers need help selecting telematics solutions that meet their needs and provide ROI," stated Mike Flynn, onboard technology manager for Penske Truck Leasing. "There's an ever-widening array of choices in the marketplace and it takes someone who understands the fleet manager's needs to help them make a solid choice."

Not too long ago, many fleet managers were in a proverbial blind spot when it came to fleet efficiency. There was no way other than a radio, and, more recently, a cell phone, to reach the driver once on the road, and managers often only heard from drivers when they reached their destinations. Record keeping hinged upon how organized the driver was.

Times have certainly changed. Today's trucking world is dominated by GPS truck tracking and directions, metrics for fuel efficiency, mileage and miles-per-gallon monitoring, electronic fuel-tax reporting and automated driver logs. The fleet manager's network extends out over the road, which is now supervised from his or her office computer with real-time updates.

"Today's onboard truck technology has enabled drivers from fleets of all sizes to safely reach their destination and concentrate on good customer service," said Flynn, a certified transportation professional who has been working with fleet technology for more than 11 years. "Fleet managers in turn can get more efficient metrics and reports, and in some cases, in near real-time."

With the changing face of fleet technology, fleet managers should be sure they are choosing the right technology to fit their needs. Before making that selection, they should understand their technology objectives, as well as the benefits of onboard technology, including managing and evaluating drivers' miles-per-gallon and idling performance; optimizing route efficiency; and streamlin-

Using onboard
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y — fleet component

ing administrative responsibilities.

Reading, Pa.-based Penske Truck Leasing was an early promoter of commercial fleet technology and continues to invest in and grow its offering. Penske recently announced its expanded private-labeled product strategy under its technology brand, Fleet I.Q., a portfolio of onboard commercial truck technology solutions. The upgraded technology offering includes industry leaders such as PeopleNet and Enhanced Vehicle Applications (EVA), which offer an array of products and services for fleets of all sizes.

"In today's challenging business climate, metrics and efficiencies take on added importance," said Flynn. "Companies are able to increase their fuel economy by teaching their drivers to drive more efficiently, and to decrease idling time."

Through relationships with technology partners, fleet service providers can offer onboard technology services such as consulting and analysis; vehicle and performance tracking; fuel management; regulatory compliance; dispatch, routes and delivery management; driver management; safety and security; trailer tracking; communications and geographic coverage.

As Flynn points out, there are hundreds of customized options out there for the fleet manager that fit their unique needs and provide them with the solutions that help generate a strong return on investment. In the 21st Century, fleet managers must take advantage of the myriad of options available, utilizing technology to allow their commercial truck fleets to operate more efficiently and effectively.

For more information visit www.GoPenske.com.

10 questions to ask before investing in fleet technology

1. With fuel costs greatly impacting the bottom line, how can I manage and evaluate my driver's miles per gallon and idling performance?

2. Would a fleet management system help me verify arrival and departure times to make sure I'm on time and alert me to issues?

3. Will fleet technology help me provide drivers with the most efficient routes?

4. How do I maintain or increase my level of customer service so I can remain competitive and stay ahead of my customer's expectations?

5. Would a system like this capture and alert me to hours-of-service violations and better manage my driver's time? Would I be able to better communicate with my drivers?

6. Will a system allow me to streamline administrative efforts and expenses?

7. Could one of these systems improve my driver's overall job satisfaction? Will taking away some of their administrative chores allow them to be more efficient?

8. Will technology help me better evaluate my drivers, help me spot and reward my best talent and improve the skills of those who need help? Also, will it help me weed out the dangerous and unproductive drivers?

9. Can fleet technology help digitize much of our paperwork and eliminate errors, perhaps even speed up response time and billing?

10. Can fleet technology allow me to be proactive in retraining and focusing drivers' attention on a safe work environment?