



Innovative Strategies for the Road Ahead

## RECOGNISING YOUR DRIVERS



## Why is this important?

Imagine the following scenario: a large humanitarian organisation has several tonnes of food it needs to send to a refugee camp urgently. The trucks are loaded and ready to go, but there are no drivers available.

Without drivers, many humanitarian and commercial activities would grind to a halt.

Drivers are responsible for the wellbeing and safety of passengers and other road users. In addition, they are in charge of high value vehicles, products and equipment. They are the most prominent public 'face' of the organisation, and often have to deal with difficult situations, bad roads, hostile environments and unfair demands. At the same time, a driver's driving style, attitude and general behaviour has a great influence on fleet costs, from fuel consumption to repairs.

Fleet management juggles 4 priorities:



1. Programme delivery  
(including timeliness);



2. Cost efficiency in  
transport provision;



3. Safety;



4. Environment  
(cleaning up the fleet).

Drivers impact all four of these priorities. Yet despite their critical role, drivers are often the lowest paid and least visible among employees. They are seldom acknowledged in any meaningful way and are taken for granted. Their contribution to the success of the organisation is not always appreciated.

Being recognised has a significant impact on employee motivation, retention rates and job satisfaction. Driver recognition initiatives in the corporate sector have proven that investment in such programmes is beneficial and leads to cost savings, while at the same time reducing crashes and improving employee pride.

## A successful recognition programme has 5 key qualities:

- **Regular** - Provide regular feedback throughout the year, rather than only during annual evaluations;
- **Positive** - Feedback is not just negative or critical. Instead, most feedback should be encouraging and positive;
- **Two-way** - Drivers are encouraged to provide feedback as well, and their suggestions are valued and taken seriously;
- **Transparent** - The process for recognising individuals is clearly laid out, well communicated and transparent to avoid accusations of favoritism;
- **Data** - Accurate measurements of key performance indicators will assist a programme to be fair and transparent.

## What to recognise

There are various driver performance indicators which can be used in a recognition programme. These generally relate to safety and fuel efficiency. Some indicators, such as harsh braking or acceleration, would need a fleet management system to track them. But others can be monitored without any special technology. Fuel efficiency, for example, requires nothing more than good record keeping.

Good performance can be measured using any or a combination of indicators. The following list provides examples of possible options:

- Average fuel economy of a driver
- Improvements over time in a driver's average fuel economy
- Number of idling occurrences
- Safety record, measured by number of:
  - Incidents and crashes per 100,000km
  - Speed violations
  - Harsh acceleration occurrences
  - Harsh braking occurrences
  - Harsh cornering occurrences
- Timeliness
- Performance of regular vehicle safety checks
- Attitude



## How to recognise

### Rewards & Bonuses:

Fleet managers may choose to reward excellent and outstanding performance or measurable aspects such as safety record and average fuel efficiency. Or they may focus on driver attitudes and work performance. While monetary rewards are always appreciated, non-monetary ones can be just as powerful. Here are a few ideas:

- Certificate of appreciation;
- Paid time off, even just a few hours on a Friday afternoon;
- Coupons or gift cards;
- Annual driver appreciation week with various fun activities and prizes provided;
- Driver Appreciation Lunch / Dinner for all the drivers and their families;
- “Thank you” card to the drivers and their families, thanking them for their hard work and all the time they spend separated during long trips;
- Small gift (a cake, certificate, round of applause) for special work milestone - for example, 3, 5 and 10 years on the job
- Lunch with the CEO / Director or other high level manager of your organisation;
- Professional development courses;
- Recognition Bulletin Board in a visible location with Driver of the Month, stories, praise etc.

### Sandwiches:

Performance management involves recognising both positive and negative behaviours. Too often, we focus on the negative. While a fleet manager may have legitimate concerns regarding a driver's performance, this should be tempered with praise and encouragement.

Use the sandwich approach if you need to provide constructive criticism: Compliment; Suggest; Compliment. Start with a compliment or an acknowledgement of the work done well. Then provide a practical suggestion and ways in which the driver can improve. Finally, remind the driver you are aware of their good work or the challenges they face on the job, so that the meeting ends on an uplifting note.



### Debriefs & Check-ins:

Having regular check-ins with Fleet Managers is one way to show drivers they are appreciated and their managers care about their welfare and performance. Don't just talk about work: show interest in a driver's personal life. Take time to acknowledge drivers' challenging and important work, and listen to what they have to say.

Use these opportunities to give positive feedback, not just criticism. Regular check-ins with the fleet manager, including debriefing after a long trip, will help drivers feel engaged with the management and improve employee retention. These short, one-on-one meetings can also provide the manager with practical, real-world information on best routing, safety issues, vehicle maintenance requirements etc.

### Opinions:

Be curious and interested in the drivers' ideas and suggestions. Don't wait for formal meetings. Actively reach out to them and ask for feedback on best routing, safe driving, vehicle maintenance, management of trips, office culture, challenges etc.



### **Staff Meetings:**

During staff meetings, call up those drivers who have gone above and beyond their job, and provide them with a reward. Crown one of them Driver of the Month. Consider asking a driver to share a story about something that happened while on the road (check with them before the meeting; don't put them on the spot!). Use these meetings as an opportunity to recognise an individual's safe driving record. Encourage driver loyalty by highlighting special work anniversaries with a cake and a gift or certificate.

### **Food & Swag:**

Provide healthy snacks such as fruit. Give company / organisation branded items such as a hat or T-shirt. Give branded, reusable water bottles, then provide drinking water dispensers so that drivers can refill their bottles.

### Communication:

Send an encouraging text message once in a while. Make sure most of your communication (in person, on phone, by email or text message) is positive and encouraging. Don't limit communication for when you have a critical suggestion. Use verbal praise: the impact of kind words is often underestimated!

### Challenges:

Give drivers a safe challenge. For example, encourage them to improve their fuel efficiency by 5%. (You will first need to provide drivers with eco-driving training, ([see this article](#) for ideas.)

Don't turn this into a competition between drivers. This should be an individualised goal to improve the driver's own current fuel efficiency or whatever aspect you want to improve. A group challenge could be to collectively improve road safety or fuel efficiency or some other aspect you or the drivers want to strengthen. Have fun, team building events.

Consider signing up for the Driver Recognition Programme or create one for your company or organisation.



## Driver Recognition Programme

Fleet Forum's Driver Recognition Programme is an eco- and safe driving competition that recognises the important role that drivers play in the sustainability and health and safety objectives of aid and development organisations. By creating a non-monetary incentive for drivers to show exemplary driver behaviour, the programme appeals to a driver's sense of pride.

The Driver Recognition Programme consists of country office qualification rounds that lead to the big final event in which the best drivers from different countries compete to be the best driver and win the annual Driver Award. The qualification rounds measure the practical driving skills and test the knowledge of drivers, while the final event simulates a 'typical day in the life of the driver'. During the finals, finalists also engage in side activities such as driving clinics and workshops that support eco- and safe driving techniques.

The objectives of the Driver Recognition Programme are to engage, educate and inspire drivers in an effort to:

- Reduce road traffic crashes and other incidents;
- Improve fuel efficiency;
- Ensure a healthy working environment;
- Increase service levels to, and engagement with, their Programmes;
- Increase driver engagement;

For more information on how your organisation's drivers can participate, contact Fleet Forum: [info@fleetforum.org](mailto:info@fleetforum.org).