Put technology to work on the road: How technology can help you manage the risk of staff and vehicles.
Technology is redefining the workplace.

How the pace of work-life has changed.

15 years ago, when you started a new job you were issued your security pass, shown the emergency exits and, if you were lucky, given an ergonomic desk chair. And that was that. HR could relax knowing the job was done.
In the intervening years we have experienced a pace of change which has been as breathtaking in its speed and impact on productivity, as it has been a breath of fresh air to cubicle bound workers everywhere.

Thanks to high-speed mobile internet and the cloud, remote and mobile workforces are increasing, and staff are spending more time out of the office. What was once a deskbound job can now be done from anywhere, and what was once a point A to point B field service job is now a critical part of a responsive customer-centric organisation.

Operationally, the benefits of this are clear:

- Increased productivity
- Improved customer experience
- Reduction in infrastructure costs through smaller offices and fewer desks
- Greater engagement, through more freedom in ways of working
- Being considered an employer of choice due to flexible work practices
- WebEx to reduce travel costs and environmental footprint
Yes, being away from the office is a good thing. But change requires a mindset shift on behalf of both businesses and staff, because when workers are on the road the vehicle becomes their workplace – practically, and legally.

Businesses have an increasing need to monitor and manage their risk exposure - particularly with the rise of ‘grey’ fleets (see page 6), while employees need to understand their responsibilities and the need for additional visibility when driving on behalf of the company.
This is because despite the best efforts of police and businesses to promote driver education and training, the road still remains a risky place for employees to be. Over the 10-year period from 2007 to 2016, 64% of fatalities involved vehicles, of which just over 45% were due to a vehicle collision on a public road (Safe Work Australia).

Non-fatal injuries are a concern for both businesses and employees. In Australia work related road crashes incur a greater average time lost in worker absence than any other workplace claim.

Ultimately, as a business you can put policies and procedural training in place, but the risk is too great to place blind trust in drivers. It’s time to put technology to work on the road.
The increased risk of grey fleet

Grey fleet describes any vehicle that is owned by an employee that is used for any work-related travel, whether or not you reimburse any employees or volunteers for its use.

The car may have been purchased through a novated lease or a cash-for-car situation, be a privately-owned vehicle used for occasional journeys or even a vehicle that an employee has hired.

While the business doesn't own the vehicle in any of these circumstances, the business liability for not providing a safe working environment remains, as a vehicle is defined as a workplace under the Australian Work Health and Safety Act 2011, regardless of ownership.

The risks include fines of up to $5 million, reputational damage, as well as the potentially serious impact on the staff member and their colleagues.

What increases the risk?
/ Grey fleets tend to be older than company owned vehicles
/ Lack the latest safety controls
/ Are difficult to ensure they are regularly serviced and maintained
Use technology to change attitudes to safety

While technology is putting more people on the road, technology is also help us keep these people safer.
Start with training

The number one thing all businesses want is to know that every employee returns safely home in the evening.

This begins before the car engine starts, with ensuring that everyone who drives has the appropriate training and driving history for their role.

Technology can help augment practical driving skills and keep them up to date, with a variety of online driver training options available that can be customised to their role, region and industry to cover skills like defensive driving, fatigue management, towing, terrain and more. As these are online, it makes it easier for you to meet your compliance obligations, as you can track and record who has undergone training, and when it needs to be repeated.

Driver behaviour monitoring

Once they are on the road, staff are out of sight, but it’s important to be able to monitor their behaviour to help them stay safe while commuting and on the road.

Telematics, or GPS tracking allows a business to receive real-time data from a small GPS tracking device installed within the vehicle. This can include information such as the vehicle’s location, direction and speed, allowing the business to monitor driver behaviour and compliance.

Combining driver behaviour, accident details and infringements helps to develop an informative driver scorecard that assists with identifying factors to rectify, and allows the behaviour to be corrected before any incident arises.
Do it by the book

Before installing any tracking technology, it's important to review the legislation applicable in the state in which you may be tracking vehicles and take the necessary steps to comply.

Depending on the state, you may need to provide prior written notice, explain how the tracking will be carried out, and the vehicle may need to have a clearly visible notice reminding drivers that they are being tracked.
Add in-vehicle technology to reduce accident risk

Vehicles are being fitted with increasingly sophisticated technology that leverages innovation in autonomous car development. This technology can either help prevent accidents completely by alerting the driver or taking over control of the vehicle, or significantly reduce the severity of an impact if it happens.
Accident avoidance

This includes features which monitor the road around the vehicle in order to either warn the driver or act independently to prevent accidents and help protect your staff while on the move. Features to look for include:

/ **Electronic stability control (ESC)**, which helps the driver from losing control by automatically applying each individual wheel brake to reduce the risk of skidding. This has been shown to reduce the risk of single car crashes by up to 25%.

/ ** Autonomous emergency braking (brake assist)** which allows the driver to apply maximum braking power or can act independently if the driver fails to react.

/ **Traction control**, which helps the driver to accelerate more smoothly especially on slippery surfaces.

/ **Collision avoidance systems**, which use radar or laser technology to detect obstacles and either provide a driver alert or act autonomously where required.

/ **Lane guidance**, which helps prevent drivers from drifting into other lanes when driving on freeways or motorways.
Driver alerts

Driver alerts provide a visual or audible warning to drivers about a potential risk, such as speed warning technology, or seat belt reminder alerts.

Within work-related driving settings, reversing incidents are the most common types of crashes, making features like pedestrian detection, 360 degree cameras and front and rear parking sensors a must have to reduce the risk to staff and the public.

Accident mitigation

Knowing that in reality not every accident is possible to avoid, consider using technology in your vehicle that is intended to reduce the severity of the impact. Recent advances include multiple air-bags, active head restraints and pre-crash systems that can predict an accident and adjust seat belts, seating position and air bag performance just before impact.

If you have staff who work alone or in remote or dangerous locations, technology is available to help them feel more connected, and protected in the event of an incident. These include in car alerts which can be triggered to signal that help is required, or vehicle crash and roll sensors to remotely monitor their safety while driving, allowing rescue crews to reach them sooner.
Trucks still carry the heavy risks

Generally trucks and other heavy commercial vehicles lag behind cars with regards to safety technology, due to the cost of incorporating it, either by the manufacturer or aftermarket. This is why so much emphasis is placed on training and modifying driver behaviour.

Technology can assist with monitoring driver behaviour, understanding driver risk and delivering targeted training to high-risk drivers through:

/ Telematics reporting that deliver real-time insights and alerts

/ Risk profiling tools that identify high-risk behaviours such as hard acceleration and braking which can be addressed with the driver
Technology can also help manage your duty of care

In many cases, when businesses actually review the number of employees using cars for work-related purposes, they find a significant number of employees that have never been considered as drivers, who have never seen the company driving policy, and who have never had their driving behaviour monitored.
It's not uncommon for grey fleet use to be **2-3 times** that of a company fleet. This is a concern, given the liability of an incident involving a grey fleet vehicle can be passed back to the business.

Once these grey fleet drivers have been identified, the use of telematics will help to monitor driver compliance, assisting business in fulfilling their duty of care to all employees and reducing their own liability as a result.

You can help to keep grey fleet drivers safer by checking, and keeping safety records to confirm the following:

1. Their vehicle has an **appropriate safety rating**
2. The car is roadworthy, registered and regularly serviced
3. The vehicle is comprehensively insured
4. The driver makes regular safety checks, including checking tyre condition
5. The driver regularly completes online safety training and is familiar with the company driving policies
6. Workers keep accurate log book records of business vehicle use (online logbooks are an effective tool here, while respecting the driver’s right to privacy.)
Technology can reduce the risk of business interruptions

Per incident, workplace injuries account for a median of 5.2 weeks in lost productivity, at an average cost of $4,350 per employer (which doesn’t include the $51,960 average cost to the worker). That’s per incident. It’s time most businesses can ill afford. From the hassle of arranging for a single shift to be covered, to the loss of a key employee for weeks or months, the business interruption from a workplace injury can be costly.
The risk: ill-maintained work vehicles

Second only to a worker who has to be off the road in causing business interruptions is a vehicle which has to be off the road. Sticking to regular maintenance schedules can be a challenge for businesses who rely on drivers to self-report issues and concerns and book the vehicle in for standard servicing.

But with automated maintenance reporting and alerts to keep vehicles on the road, you are able to ensure that vehicles are maintained in line with the manufacturers recommendations which can increase their overall useful life, while reducing the cost of repairs over this time.

The risk: Inefficient fleet utilisation

Growing awareness of the inefficient use of business resources was a key driver behind many companies’ shift to a hot-desking policy, and with a clear understanding of how well your fleet is being used, this approach can be applied to company vehicles as well.

Telematics solutions can allow you to harness usage data to uncover:

/ Vehicle utilisation
/ How many vehicles are required, and where they need to be
/ Whether fleet usage complies with the fleet policy
/ Where usage of vehicles could be optimised,
/ Whether any vehicles can be redeployed or reduced
/ The impact of any changes that you make
Technology can lessen the overall financial impact of vehicles

- Save money with fewer accidents and incidents
- Less insurance claims and eventually lower premiums
- Reduce private use of company vehicles, reducing the cost of fuel use
New technology may mean it’s time to reconsider your fleet

Fleet telematics provides increasingly sophisticated insights that may help shape both your company policy, and how your fleet is structured.
Get a better picture of your fleet risk

Start by looking at the overall picture of the vehicles in your company, making sure to include any vehicles which are used for work purposes, whether they are owned by your business, or are employee vehicles.

Once the total vehicle picture is understood, carry out a simple risk assessment to estimate the total mileage travelled across the fleet and the number of incidents that have occurred.

Consider the causes of any incidents, as well as the costs to the business including both out of pocket expenses as well as any increase in insurance premiums.

Review your fleet policy

Use this information to review and update your fleet policy to account for:

- Telematics use
- Grey fleet drivers
- Online vehicle logbooks
- Mandatory safety technology use - what vehicle technology is in their vehicles, what it does, how to use it safely and the potential risks of misuse
- Clauses to address the cause of any incidents not already covered by the policy
Review your fleet

Getting the right mix of vehicles for your business remains key. Regularly reviewing your business’s fleet requirements means that employees are provided with vehicles that are fit for purpose and best suited to the business tasks they carry out. This helps businesses find the most cost effective way for employees to travel.

Additionally, optimising the turnover of your fleet helps to access many of the safety factors that help drivers avoid or reduce the impact of an injury that are available in newer vehicles, such as multiple air-bags, electronic stability control, lane guidance and autonomous emergency braking.

To make migrating to newer technology more cost effective, there are now packages that bundle all leasing, maintenance and fleet management technology costs into one simple monthly payment, making it easier to predict your operating expenses.

Alternatively, a review may discover that your team is making more use of teleconferencing or spending more time working from home. This may open the door for your business to defleet, or offer a smaller number of pool cars, reducing the size and cost of your fleet. Always keep aware of the hidden risks of a growing grey fleet in these cases.
What’s ahead on the road?

We can’t look far into the future of driving without having to consider the commercial viability of autonomous vehicles, in the form of cars, trucks and drones. While they will feature incredibly sophisticated safety technology, they will all require human input at some point, which opens the door to risk.
Businesses will need to factor in training and education to ensure that people who interact with autonomous vehicles have the appropriate skills and awareness to be able to operate them in a safe and responsible manner.

And closer to today, new electric cars with vastly lower emissions and a lower cost fuelling are growing in popularity. As with all new technology the risks may not immediately be apparent, but in a country as vast as Australia, businesses may have to consider the practical impact of vehicles with limited battery range, and a lack of public charging stations, both of which carry risks of staff being stranded.

Risk has always been a fact of life when it comes to business; from the day we hire our first employee we are responsible for their safety and security, while giving them the tools they require to be productive and engaged.

The change in the way we work has been momentous, but we are lucky to be operating at a time when technology is able to give us control and insight that has never before been possible.

The challenge is to ensure we are using the right tools effectively, and that staff understand enough to welcome it, so that we can harness technology to our advantage.
About Fleetpartners

With over 55,000 vehicles on the road, FleetPartners is one of Australasia’s leading fleet management and leasing companies. We combine over 30 years of expertise with leading-edge technology to offer innovative, cost effective solutions that are individually designed to meet the specific needs of our customers.

Whether you are a multinational seeking support for a large corporate fleet, a smaller business wanting to keep a team efficient on the road, or an individual looking for a personal vehicle financing solution, FleetPartners can keep you ahead of a world on the move.

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