

Satellite TV Firm Uses Telematics to Increase MPG, Safety

Carl Roth had two things in mind when he was looking at GPS systems for his company's vehicles: safety and accountability. As the fleet manager for Multiband Corp., DIRECTV's largest master system operator for multi-dwelling units and one of the largest home service providers, Roth is responsible for 1,700 service vehicles throughout the eastern United States and for the safety of the technicians who drive them. Since each technician/driver is assigned a van that they take home, Roth needed a system that would help him monitor the van location and driver productivity.

"We wanted to know where our investments were, and we wanted to make sure the technicians got home safely," said Roth.

Donlen, a leading fleet management and leasing solution provider based in Northbrook, Ill., approached Roth about their sister program, GreenDriver®. GreenDriver features comprehensive online driver training, DriverPoint™ Telematics, GPS reporting, and Driver Behavior Scorecards. Roth liked what he saw and decided to implement the DriverPoint Telematics system as a pilot program in 300 vehicles, divided into three groups. Ordinarily, drivers simply plug the small DriverPoint device into the OBD-II port of their vehicles. However, Roth had regional supervisors of each group install the devices. Only one group of technicians was informed about the program. When DriverPoint's automated online reports began coming in, Roth saw marked differences in each group's driving habits. The technicians who knew they were being monitored drove more safely and avoided rapid acceleration and hard stops.

"When we know we're being held accountable, it changes our psychology," said Roth. Roth decided to expand the program past the pilot phase and install DriverPoint Telematics in all of Multiband's vehicles. Roth reviewed the initial reports with GreenDriver personnel and immediately identified some alarming driving habits. Roth got the message out to the supervisors, who then discussed the issues with their technicians.

The result: Multiband's accident rate decreased 16 percent in eight months. In addition, complaints to the company's Driver's Alert number dropped by 30 percent since going full-time with the program.

DriverPoint identified another issue for Multiband: There were technicians leaving their trucks idle, often for hours, while on a job. After supervisors addressed this with them, the average mpg increased from 13.46 to 13.87, a significant change for a fleet that drives up to four million miles per month.

The benefits of the GreenDriver program are not one-sided. "Monthly Driver Scorecards ensure that drivers understand their role in the program," said Nicholas Ehrhart, GreenDriver Commercial Leader. "Drivers quickly realize how small changes in their behavior can add up to significant cost savings and reduced fuel consumption." Multiband developed a multi-level point system that rewards each technician for achieving established scores on their Scorecards. One level earns them a certificate and a pin; the next level, a pay incentive for that month.

"It's a trickle-down economics effect. We tell techs that if the company saves money, we can pay them more," said Roth. This is one of the reasons the DriverPoint program has been well-received by the

technicians. There's even an informal competition among Multiband's warehouses to see who gets "bragging rights" for the best score. One warehouse "really stepped forward," said Roth, stretching its average fuel range from 13.5 to 15 miles per gallon.

"Much of the program's success hinges on supervisors delivering the message to technicians that it's not just about making them accountable," says Roth. "We care about their safety. The better we can convey that message to each driver, the better success we have with the program."

For more information about GreenDriver or DriverPoint Telematics, please contact Nicholas Ehrhart at (847) 412-4968, or visit www.greendriver.com.