

Transportation Distribution Company Improves Fuel Economy 12 Percent with PedalCoach®



“With the assistance of PedalCoach® we have seen the ‘old school’ methods of engine and transmission use change rapidly. Our drivers are quickly advancing with the new equipment technology, earning additional income for themselves and savings for TDC while continuing our fleet efforts for professional, safe driving.”

—Steve Page, TDC Vice President of Safety

COMPANY PROFILE Transport Distribution Company is a Joplin, Mo.-based truckload carrier that serves large, national corporations and smaller industries in the central portion of the United States. TDC obtained the Missouri State Overall Safe Fleet Award in 2011. The company offers same-day and next-day “first morning” transit across the Midwest with a modern fleet of 148 tractors and 350 dry-van trailers.

BUSINESS SITUATION

Making gains in fuel economy is essential for survival in the transportation industry where the difference between profit and loss is measured in pennies per mile. The biggest target for fleets today is the 30 percent of fuel economy that is under direct control of the operator.

TDC has been training drivers to save fuel since 2001. Its training started with face-to-face meetings at 18,000-mile intervals with “DDEC” reports. TDC downloaded the reports manually from the electronic control modules (ECMs) of vehicles as they came in for maintenance.

The reports captured a wide range of driving behaviors. The drivers who achieved the target mpg received a fuel bonus for that period. The downside of this approach was waiting for weeks to give drivers positive feedback or areas of improvements needed. “By then, we would sit down to discuss the download only to get into discussions of how the tractor was driven in the past week — not the prior 16,000 miles of driving that had the

overall impact,” says Steve Page, vice president of safety.

As its technology evolved, TDC began reporting ECM data on a weekly and daily basis through its mobile computing platform. Management could identify performance issues more quickly. The information was too generalized, however, to help drivers understand what they could have done differently to improve given the conditions they were operating in.

THE SOLUTION

TDC became acquainted with the PedalCoach application from LinkeDrive in March, 2013. Later that spring, Page selected a group of drivers with varying years of experience and results for fuel-efficient driving to begin using the new technology.

TDC runs PedalCoach on devices mounted in the cab for drivers to see as they scan their mirrors. To use the technology, drivers only have to remember one instruction, says Page: “keep this thing in the green and safe!”

The “thing” is a needle on the user interface — an analog-style gauge — that represents the flow rate of fuel to the engine. The “green” represents the fueling target; it is an area at the bottom third of the gauge below the yellow and red.

PedalCoach calculates the fuel target instantaneously using ECM data. The target is dynamic but the green area stays static on the interface to make it easy for drivers to identify the appropriate amount of fuel to give the truck at any given moment.

Audible alerts warn drivers if they leave the green zone, prompting a response to ease up on the throttle or change gears. The “cha-ching” of a cash register sounds after every mile drivers complete in the green.

“Keeping it in the green and safe” reinforces all of the behaviors TDC used to highlight using DDEC reports for progressive shifting, excess speeding, time in top gear and idling. PedalCoach also gives TDC a virtual driver trainer for progressive acceleration, handling the hills and forward awareness to minimize non-emergency braking.

THE BENEFITS

For TDC drivers, “keeping it in the green and safe!” has proven to be an enlightening experience. Overall, TDC realized a 12 percent improvement in mpg within six months of using PedalCoach for a variety of drivers.

TDC is using PedalCoach to help drivers not only meet its fleet mpg goals but to exceed them. Some of its top performers have been able to raise their mpg from 8 to 9. Besides getting a fuel bonus, drivers who meet the fleet’s mpg goals are qualified to move into new trucks. PedalCoach stays with the drivers as they change trucks to ease the adjustment period to new engines.

TDC is also seeing a return on safety from using PedalCoach as drivers are reducing their speeds and aggressive behaviors to conserve fuel.

“Rather than focusing on how hard they can run our drivers are focused on ‘keeping it in the green and safe,’” Page says. 🚚

PedalCoach
by LinkeDrive

