TRANSFLO®

8 Genius Ideas to Maximize Value from Existing Telematics Data

By Verlen Larsen, Solutions Architect, Transflo

Straight out of the box, ELD and telematics solutions give fleets a treasure trove of valuable data to use in safety, operations, customer service and, most importantly, for driver management.

Any difficulties using the data is not from it lacking volume. In fact, the greater challenge — and opportunity — will be mining the truckloads of data these systems provide to discover new insights and drive improvements.

The answers to many challenges in fleet management are often hidden in plain sight. With some guidance and a little ingenuity, anyone can leverage their data in new and creative ways to gain a competitive edge.

Leaders at Hill Brothers and Condesa Freight International have done it. This guide shares how they maximize the value of telematics, and other proven ideas, to creatively use data in eight areas that matter most.

1 Use safety scorecards to build trust.

Establishing trust between professional truck drivers and telematics data is essential to make sustainable improvements in fleet safety and performance. Otherwise, drivers may feel unfairly measured or scrutinized and quickly disengage.

Drivers constantly assess their own crash risks and predict behaviors of surrounding motorists. Yet when management shares critical event data captured by a telematics system, drivers may question the validity.

As an example, a fleet manager receives an alert for a "hard brake" event. This could signal the driver was following too closely or going too fast for conditions.

Identifying patterns of behavior, rather than focusing on isolated events, helps build trust in the data. Using a scorecard approach for measuring patterns of performance can engage drivers in friendly competition and elevate their status in the workplace.

Hill Brothers Transportation, a 230-truck carrier with dry van and refrigerated operations, was getting critical event reports from an ELD and fleet telematics system. The reports made it difficult to separate safe drivers from poor performers.

In August 2020, the Omaha, Neb.-based company deployed Transflo Telematics. Director of Safety Raul Soria configured a Driver Safety Scorecard report included in the system to monitor and assess driver behaviors.

Managers use the report to identify areas of strength and weakness for each driver and the overall fleet. The Driver Safety Scorecard determines who needs coaching, which Soria defines as "having a meaningful discussion prior to an event occurring."

Fleet managers focus their coaching efforts on the bottom 10% of drivers and leave the middle 80% alone, he said. Each month, managers recognize the top 10% of drivers through phone calls and in the company's newsletter.

Hill Brothers also uses the Driver Safety Scorecard to conduct in-depth annual reviews with all drivers, individually, to help them operate as safely as possible.

2

Set preventive speed controls.

Speeding is the riskiest of all driving behaviors. Statistics show it contributes to 27% of all truck fatalities. Most ELD and telematics systems come with reports that notify fleet managers of speeding events. Here's an idea to fine-tune a report to make a fleet-wide impact.

Hill Brothers takes a proactive approach to speed management by governing its trucks at a top speed of 70 mph. When acquiring new vehicles, sometimes the fleet puts units into service without getting an opportunity to verify their speed setting.

The company set up a Governed Speed Rule report in Transflo Telematics that detects if a vehicle exceeds 70 mph for a duration of five minutes.
This exception report identifies out-of-spec trucks, which Hill Brothers then routes to a fleet terminal for reprogramming.

Another telematics feature that can help prevent speeding is to alert drivers if they exceed local posted speed limits and provide managers with reports that show patterns of speed limit violations.

Another genius idea is to use geofencing features to set location-specific speed limits. Transflo Telematics has a feature where users can draw polygonal geofences around a location and create reporting rules for speed activities inside the zone. A report could notify a fleet if a driver exceeds 15 mph at a customer location, for example.

27%

Crash statistics show speeding contributes to 27% of all truck crash fatalities.

3 Gain ground with freight visibility.

Shippers and freight brokers expect to receive continuous shipment tracking updates from motor carriers. This expectation has grown during the past 18 months of global supply chain disruptions and depleted inventories.

Telematics systems give fleets internal visibility of assets and shipments, but motor carriers are gaining a service advantage by how they share this information with their customers.

Condesa Freight International has a small fleet of about 20 drivers, but its freight visibility technology rivals that of much larger competitors. The San Antonio, Texas-based fleet developed a custom web portal for customers to monitor the status of cross-border shipments.

Shipment tracking data for the portal comes from API connections with the fleet's Transflo Telematics platform. When Condesa assigns a vehicle to a load, the customer receives a temporary URL for tracking the shipment status.

Text updates about the shipment appear on the left side of a map view with the location and breadcrumb trail. The updates come from drivers who use the company's Transflo Mobile+ app to enter text and select from a list of milestones such as "checked in at gate," "loading" or "unloading," explains Travis Hamdan, general manager.

Drivers also enter the Bill of Lading number, load seal number and other shipment details.

The customer visibility portal has freed dispatchers from answering calls and emails from customers. If a shipment has issues, dispatchers can respond before the customer is aware of the problem, Hamdan said.

Condesa Freight International's revenues have increased by getting more repeat business from shippers and freight brokers that use its visibility portal, Hamdan said. The office staff is also more efficient from drivers updating their status at all hours. Dispatchers do not need to contact drivers for shipment information, which could interrupt them during rest breaks.

Condesa Freight International's revenues have increased by getting more repeat business from shippers and freight brokers that use its visibility portal.

Automating maintenance alerts.

4

Order backlogs for new trucks and trailers are growing due to material shortages, especially for critical parts like microchips. This leaves motor carriers with no other options than extending equipment trade cycles. Paying close attention to maintenance has become more critical to prevent costly surprises.

Telematics systems can alert managers when items like tires, oil changes and other preventive maintenance (PM) tasks are due based on dates, mileage, engine hours or vehicle operating data.

Condesa Freight International is using its telematics system to send fleet managers location-based maintenance reminders.

The company's assets routinely cross the U.S.-Mexico border. It has a sister fleet in Mexico that operates more than 100 trucks from multiple terminal locations. When a driver or fleet manager spots a maintenance issue such as a light, tire, or diagnostics fault code, the fleet notes these items in the Command Center module of the Transflo Telematics platform.

This process gives U.S. and Mexico fleet managers alerts when the assets cross geofences at company facilities. The alerts direct managers at each facility to get the equipment repaired, Hamdan explains.

Another genius fleet maintenance idea is to solve problems by using analytics. A company that operates a mixed fleet of vehicles, for instance, could mine the data to find out which assets are getting the best fuel economy or detect when the mpg of a certain model starts to degrade and fine-tune its trade cycles.

Paying close attention to maintenance has become more critical to prevent costly surprises.

5

Giving drivers a single sign-on experience.

The possibilities to use telematics data and mobile applications to improve driver productivity and satisfaction are vast. A growing number of fleets can do both, simultaneously, by using technology to give drivers more control over their work schedules.

Condesa Freight International created a web portal that drivers use to self-dispatch. Drivers access the portal from their phones to view information on available loads. When drivers select a load, the company's back-office system updates their dispatch assignment.

Automating the company's dispatch process through the portal has virtually eliminated back-and-forth discussions with drivers about which loads to take, Hamdan said.

Hill Brothers uses its Transflo Telematics system to measure dwell time at shipping and receiving facilities to identify which customers are causing utilization problems. The operations team also monitors how drivers utilize available hours-of-service to coach them how to be more productive, Soria said.

The company is expanding its menu of integrated applications with the Transflo platform to increase driver productivity and satisfaction. Hill Brothers activated CoPilot turn-by-turn navigation from Trimble Maps. Currently it is evaluating Drivewyze for weigh station bypass and location-based safety alerts to avoid low-clearance bridges and other risks, Soria said.

By using the Transflo Mobile+ app, drivers forHill Brothers can fill out and transmit digital forms to the office for vehicle inspections, surveys, job referrals, and weekly training evaluation forms, among other processes.

Hill Brothers is planning future enhancements for the Transflo Mobile+ app. Drivers will be able to enter a trailer number to locate assets in drop yards and monitor temperatures of refrigerated loads. The company is also in the process of developing a custom scorecard that drivers will access in the app.
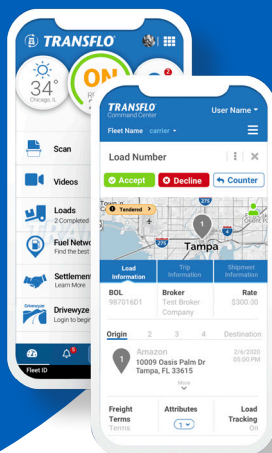
6

Shorten engine idling with temperature visibility

With fuel prices rising and weather patterns changing, fleets are losing more money from engine idling. Telematics systems can track metrics for engine idling, but fleet managers have limited resources to coach drivers and change their behaviors.

To identify drivers who are idling more than necessary, fleets can set up a custom idling report that includes the ambient temperatures for trucks. Temperature could be the determining factor for whether a manager approves a long idle time of six to eight hours, for instance.

If a report shows a driver was in Chicago and idled for six hours when the ambient temperature was -10, a manager could skip the coaching. On the other hand, if the same manager sees another driver in Texas idling four hours when the temperature was 65, that will merit a discussion.

Fleets can also use telematics data to create fuel-saving incentives. As an example, fleets could pay drivers an extra two cents per mile if reports show their engine idle percentage stayed under a certain amount for the month or other measurement period.

7 Use data to exonerate drivers.

When an accident occurs, ELD and telematics data can be the first line of defense. Having a detailed, accurate record of speed, braking, throttle, and other event data can fill in the gaps at the accident scene to prove who was at fault.

Transflo Telematics, powered by Geotab, uses the most accurate and detailed method available to record vehicle and driver data for purposes of accident reconstruction. GPS locations are within two or three feet of accuracy. The platform also uses intelligent "curve logic" algorithms that constantly watch for and record sub-second changes in speed, position, and engine information.

In the vehicle, a Transflo device from Geotab constantly monitors various inputs and determines the appropriate time to store a value. Comparatively, most telematics systems use a simple time- or distance-based logging algorithm

GPS locations are within two or three feet of accuracy.

that reports data on a fixed schedule — such as every five minutes. This may cause important high or low values to be missed.

Curve logic provides detailed reports on driving behaviors and a more accurate representation of a critical safety event by logging the essential points on a graph and discarding redundant points.

8 Use telematics data to scale business growth.

In the asset-heavy trucking business, owners traditionally have equated growth with adding more trucks, trailers, and drivers. Creatively using telematics data can help fleets scale their businesses by operating more efficiently and maximizing growth opportunities with their best customers.

Condesa Freight International plans to use its telematics system, in combination with other software, to provide top customers more visibility to available capacity. The fleet could give shipper or freight broker customers a capacity

notification for when a truck is available, or will soon be available, when triggered by the asset crossing a geofence at locations where the customer has loads.

Included in this guide are 8 Genius Ideas for leveraging telematics data in creative ways. Each idea is simple to implement with existing technology. In some cases, making a change will be as simple as configuring a report to utilize data in new ways. Putting ideas into motion is easier with a telematics platform that is flexible and capable of supporting new initiatives.

Resources:
To view a recording of the webinar "Genius Ideas for Using Your Existing Telematics Data," visit URL.

For more helpful resources, please visit **transflo.com**