

HOW-TO GUIDE

5 ways better data can improve fleet management

Always having quality, timely, and reliable data is **among the top concerns for today's fleet managers**. Having real-time data impacts everything from optimizing efficiency, productivity, and safety to reducing unnecessary costs. For your fleet managers to succeed, however, they must be able to make actionable decisions that will reduce your operational expenses—without sacrificing on the quality of your service.

Here are 5 ways better data can improve your fleet management:

1. Register vehicle assets in an asset management system

Running a large fleet can make tracking your assets an unwieldy job. It's likely you have hundreds of assets to maintain, along with purchase orders, warranties, and other documentation. To have a complete understanding of how well your equipment assets are performing, you must be tracking them from cradle to grave. That means keeping track of the critical information related to your assets, so you can know what vehicles are taking the biggest toll on your resources, what departments are operating most efficiently, and when your assets need to be serviced or replaced—and what their warranties will cover.

An enterprise asset management (EAM) system can help you to track this information by helping you to create inventories of your parts, warranties, and driver data. You can also use your EAM system to track an asset's service history, so you know when it needs to be serviced, replaced, or retired. Most importantly, the data structure created in your EAM system will serve as the foundation for a more effective maintenance strategy.

2. Plan for preventative maintenance

Breakdowns aren't your friend. Not keeping up on preventative maintenance schedules, poor driving, and inferior parts (like tires or brake pads) can all add up to lost time and unexpected costs. Sure, you can run your fleet until you have breakdowns and then schedule maintenance, but that's an expensive proposition: as your equipment gets older you'll be facing more breakdowns, resulting in an unacceptable amount of downtime. To be successful, you must be proactive about your maintenance—handling potential problems before they arise to keep your equipment in the best shape possible.

How often do you need to schedule oil changes and other routine maintenance? Are you choosing optimal maintenance intervals based on your unique conditions and usage, which may vary from manufacturers' specs? An

EAM system can keep track of these details and send you alerts when it's time for service. When you have an effective preventative maintenance schedule in effect, you can prevent problems before they happen—and keep your vehicles on the road.

3. Stay on top of technicians, training, and tools

To run a productive shop, you need to know how your technicians are spending their time. With shop management and time tracking tools you can make sure your technicians are completing their work orders correctly and in a reasonable amount of time. If your mechanics aren't getting through their jobs quickly enough—or maybe they have a lot of repeat work to do—it could be that they need better training, or that they don't have the right tools they need to get their jobs done. Even something as simple as ensuring that all of your service technicians are properly trained on **performing tire inspections** can significantly help to extend the life of your vehicles. Better yet, by tracking this data, you can see how well your fleet is operating on a daily level and make sure you have the right people and tools in place to keep your service levels high.

4. Track your vehicles and fuel expenses

Even when prices are low, fuel is one of the biggest costs in fleet management. You can't afford to waste time or money on inefficient routes that regularly take your drivers through high-traffic areas or construction. Additionally, proper driver training can help you reduce wasteful driving practices. That's why you must be able to send real-time route or traffic alerts to your drivers. Equipping your vehicles with the most up-to-date technologies—like an onboard computing system—can keep your drivers connected to the back office to receive alerts.

In addition, outfitting your drivers with wearable technologies like smart watches or mobile devices like tablets or smart phones can help you to communicate in real time—keeping your routes efficient and your fuel expenses in line. Looking towards the future, autonomous vehicles, machine-to-machine (M2M) communication, and internet of things (IoT) enabled vehicles and assets **are revolutionizing how fleets are run**. Lastly, by taking advantage of these technologies, you'll also be able to quickly respond to customer service issues.

5. Manage your parts inventory

Managing your inventory levels means making sure you always have the parts you need when you need them—instead of storage rooms filled with parts you no longer need. Your EAM system can help you to manage the purchasing of parts so you can cut down on redundant or obsolete inventory. It's also good to know what parts have a high level of use and are constantly being reordered. Your EAM system can help track your parts as they're coming and going. Are you spending a lot of money to maintain vehicles that are getting towards the end of their usefulness? Are your mechanics not installing certain parts properly? Are you still ordering parts for equipment that's about to become obsolete? By tracking your parts inventory, you'll know.

Ultimately, all of the operational information that you're tracking can give you insights into how all facets of your business are performing. From your inventory, to servicing, to fuel expenses, to your asset inventory, keeping track of all of the data your organization produces will create a larger picture of how you can run your fleet more efficiently.



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INF-2481508-en-US-0421-1



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