

Electronic Logging Devices

Implementing ELDs the Right Way

The decision's been made: You must run your fleet on ELDs.

So, the question for you then becomes, how will you roll out the technology in a way that's a positive experience for your drivers and back office staff — as well as a contributor to your bottom line?

Maverick Transportation Shares its Experience

In 2010, Maverick Transportation began an effort to achieve deeper compliance across its fleet of 1,550 trucks.

And, that effort included laying the groundwork for electronic driver logs.

The Maverick team's early steps included matching position histories from their onboard technology to their 1,700 drivers' paper logs. Then, in July of 2011, the installation of ELD predecessor technology (EOBRs) began, with the carrier reaching full implementation by September 2011.

It was an effort that required a lot of commitment from everyone, but it paid off — and quickly.

Initially, Maverick took a five to seven percent capacity hit, but the company rapidly turned the decline into a positive increase, because the tools they put in place meant they weren't leaving hours on the table.

How did they do it? What lessons did they learn? What best practices would you be wise to adopt?

Wayne Brown, vice president of information technology at Maverick Transportation, shares his insight — and, it's valuable insight, at that.

Brown is an active voice in the transportation technology field, serving on several advisory boards and action committees for industry suppliers. Furthermore, Maverick's IT team was recognized by Computer World with the 2012 Best in Business Intelligence Editor's Choice Award.

In short, he knows what he's talking about.



Fully-Commit to the ELD Implementation Process

If you're serious about launching a successful ELD implementation, your organization must demonstrate a commitment to safety — top, down, and across the board. It will require an investment of time on the front-end and there will be a learning curve that will slow you down temporarily. Expect that.

However, if you do it well, you'll operate a fleet that's safer and more efficient than it ever was before.

And, it all starts with a commitment to communicating effectively across your entire team — even before the logging solution has been selected.

At Maverick, there was complete transparency across the entire organization, including the drivers. "Every bit of pain that we felt or we felt they would feel, that was communicated across the board," says Brown.

It's a little different now that the ELD mandate is now realized — implementation is no longer a choice — but that doesn't change the importance of communication.

Brown will tell you, "You've got to communicate to your guys and train them for a lot of reasons, including retention and optimization. We had that commitment."

Choose Technology that Offers Real-Time Insight

In Maverick's case, they already had in-cab technology that would support electronic logs — they just had to turn on the software. But for carriers that are starting from a clean slate, Brown offers this sage advice:

"I highly recommend that you select a vendor that has a real-time connected solution. There will be a lot of truckstop ELD-type solutions that meet the minimum requirements of the regulation, but they really won't provide companies with the data they need to manage and utilize their equipment in a more efficient and knowledgeable way than they do today."

"I highly recommend that you select a vendor that has a real-time connected solution. There will be a lot of truckstop ELD-type solutions that meet the minimum requirements of the regulation, but they really won't provide companies with the data they need to manage and utilize their equipment in a more efficient and knowledgeable way than they do today."

Brown goes on to recommend an ELD vendor that offers, at a minimum, sophisticated cloud services with portals or web services and APIs to integrate with your existing technologies. That way, you'll be able to use every bit of data available in real time to gain maximum efficiencies.

Invest in ELD Training

Ask Brown and he'll tell you that training is absolutely critical to a successful ELD rollout.

"When we first implemented electronic logs, we brought every driver into our North Little Rock office for training before turning on the unit," Brown tells us. And, keep in mind that Maverick is an OTR operation, so bringing their 1,700 drivers in for training was no easy feat.

"The worst thing you can do to these guys is hand them new technology without training — without explaining how it works, what it does, and why they have it. Turning it on and letting 'em loose would've definitely been a mistake!"

At Maverick, training consisted of two hours of instructor-led and hands-on training. Drivers spent time in a lab, changing duty statuses and getting comfortable with the devices before they ever even attempted to operate the electronic logs in their cabs.

Trainers then took their education one step further. They climbed into the cab with each driver, logged them in, made sure the technology was working as expected, and double-checked to ensure drivers understood how it worked.

In the end, this investment on the front end dramatically minimized frustration and confusion among their drivers. It wasn't a simple thing to do, but it made for a much more positive experience for everyone involved.

"The worst thing you can do to these guys is hand them new technology without training — without explaining how it works, what it does, and why they have it. Turning it on and letting 'em loose would've definitely been a mistake," says Brown.

Of course, drivers weren't the only ones to undergo training at Maverick. Everyone that managed drivers — from safety, operations, and logistics departments — underwent training, as well. And, not only on ELDs, but on operational logistics, too.

Brown says, "We feel like it's important that everybody is committed and has an understanding of what the driver's dealing with, so they can address it — like driver harassment from the customer."

And, the training continues today.

As new drivers and new back office hires come on board, Maverick gives them three to four hours of instructor-led training and testing.

"Not only do we do train on electronic logs, but we also train on paper logs and understanding logging in general. We do that for several reasons: One, just to fundamentally understand hours of service, and two, sometimes sensors go bad or a device fails and you have to convert to paper logs during that period of time."

If you're committed to compliance, Brown will tell you that ELDs are a positive addition to your existing fleet management tools. "We found that they improved the life of the driver in many ways. They don't have to fill out logs and keep up with the paperwork," he says.

"You'll hear this from various companies — our veteran drivers that complained and were upset about us moving to electronic logs, many of those guys, if they left the company, came back after a period of time. Every one of them said that they would never want go back to doing the paper logs again. So, once driver acceptance occurs, there's tremendous buy in."

"You'll hear this from various companies — our veteran drivers that complained and were upset about us moving to electronic logs, many of those guys, if they left the company, came back after a period of time. Every one of them said that they would never want go back to doing the paper logs again. So, once driver acceptance occurs, there's tremendous buy in."

Put that Valuable ELD Data to Work

Whether you're a smaller company working from an ELD portal or a more sophisticated shop using fleet management technology integrations, you need to incorporate that data in your route planning decisions. Doing so will give your drivers the best chance of success and safety on the road. Likewise, the data is crucial in allowing you to more fully utilize your trucks and boost efficiency.

And, this is where an ELD that offers real-time data visibility comes into play.

Because of those portals and integrations, you know exactly how many hours that driver has every time he updates his position or sends in a message.

How many hours does he have remaining to drive and to work?
Is she on break and when is she coming off?

These are the key data points you can only easily access with a connected solution, and you can put them to work for your fleet.

Maverick has also developed optimization utilization logic into its transportation management software. It allows their fleet managers to monitor service failures and optimize routes by looking at delivery times. As newer, better projections come in because traffic is light or a crash has reduced vehicles to one lane, they can easily update their route plans.

What's more, Brown says, "We've developed a lot of forward-looking, predictive ETA solutions that put drivers on the most optimal loads, based on the hours they have remaining and the hours they will need to make a delivery."



Image courtesy www.truckdriversalary.com.

"We've automated all that, but you can do the same thing if you don't have that back office sophistication," tells Brown. "If you're a smaller fleet, you can go to the portal and look at those hours. The calculations are a little more tedious, but you can definitely get there when you know where the drivers are at and if they're bumping up against their 70."

"We've developed a lot of forward-looking, predictive ETA solutions that put drivers on the most optimal loads, based on the hours they have remaining and the hours they will need to make a delivery"

Go Beyond HOS Compliance

Of course, there's a lot you can learn from the data that goes far beyond simple Hours of Service compliance and utilization optimization.

”

“We learned through our data that guys that are off for more than 72 hours tend to be more likely to have workers’ comp issues and accident issues. So, whenever we know that somebody’s off for a particular amount of time, we actually will reach out to them and have a return-to-work conversation; we welcome them back and have a simple ‘Be safe’ discussion.”

Not only did Maverick glean insights regarding shift differentials and their impact on safety, they discovered a tie between extended time off and injuries and crashes.

Brown shares, “We learned through our data that guys that are off for more than 72 hours tend to be more likely to have workers’ comp issues and accident issues. So, whenever we know that somebody’s off for a particular amount of time, we actually will reach out to them and have a return-to-work conversation; we welcome them back and have a simple ‘Be safe’ discussion.”

And, those efforts are making a difference.

The same goes for traffic, weather, truck breakdowns, and more. Clean, accurate data allows you to utilize those hours of service or shut drivers down in the most optimized way possible.

ELD data can also go a step further and provide you with the backup you need to advocate for your drivers. Educating shippers on driver harassment, for example, is going to be a big deal moving forward — and it’s an education that’s easier to provide when you’ve got data on your side.

“We have had shippers where the driver was absolutely out of hours while he was unloading and was not able to park at that customer’s location. The more sophisticated shippers, that’s not always an issue, but there are those guys out there, those dock guys that have not been educated,” Brown says. “They aren’t necessarily trying to be harmful, they just don’t understand the rules and driver harassment, so that’s a big deal.”

“These issues are out of the driver’s control now,” Brown continues. “He doesn’t have the ability to necessarily fudge the logs for 15 minutes. They have no control of detention, so they may start their day in a good place, and then they get detained for 3-1/2 hours for loading, and then that puts everything on tilt for the rest of the load.”

At the end of the day, what does all of this mean?

ELDs allow you to be more proactive when it comes to keeping your drivers safe, happy, and in compliance.

Get Started Now

Like we said, the ELD Mandate has made the electronic versus paper logs decision for you—but the way in which you move forward from here is very much up to you.

We encourage you to begin the process now. The more time you have to communicate with your teams and train everyone in on the technology, the more likely everyone will be to have a positive experience—and the more quickly you'll begin to realize your return on investment.

Not quite sure where to begin? Contact us at +1 (800) 348-7227 and we'll help you get started!

Why choose Omnitrac's?

- Award-winning, 24/7/365 support teams that understand your business.
- ELD Mandate thought leadership — we've helped shape the legislation and we share important resources at www.eldfacts.com
- Proven solutions for every stage of your growth — fleets of all sizes, including eight of the ten largest for-hire fleets and the five largest private fleets in North America use Omnitrac's.
- Robust integrations — and the technical expertise to maximize your tech stack.
- Intuitive solutions and a focus on the end-user experience — making drivers' lives easier, building a positive image for your company, and retaining your workforce.

About Omnitrac's, LLC

Omnitrac's, LLC is a global pioneer of fleet management, routing and predictive analytics solutions for private and for-hire fleets. Omnitrac's' nearly 1,000 employees deliver software-as-a-service-based solutions to help more than 50,000 private and for-hire fleet customers manage nearly 1,500,000 mobile assets in more than 70 countries. The company pioneered the use of commercial vehicle telematics over 25 years ago and serves today as a powerhouse of innovative, intuitive technologies. Omnitrac's transforms the transportation industry through technology and insight, featuring best-in-class solutions for compliance, safety and security, productivity, telematics and tracking, transportation management (TMS), planning and delivery, data and analytics, and professional services.

This article was adapted from a webinar hosted by CCJ magazine and sponsored by Omnitrac's, "CCJ Presents: Preparing for the ELD Mandate." Experience the full webinar recording at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6121487382258139137>.

Learn how you can use our applications, platforms, and services to reduce costs, increase profitability, and stay competitive. Visit www.omnitrac's.com and let us show you how you can save time and money.



omnitrac's

717 N. Harwood Street
Suite 1300
Dallas, Texas 75201
U.S.A.
(800) 348-7227
www.omnitrac's.com