

PROFESSIONAL Driver

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The difficult path to green compliance

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Professional Driver Car of the Year 2019

Judgement Day



Boost your green credentials and reduce dead miles

Tim Barnes-Clay

It is evident that technology has changed the way we communicate. Therefore, it stands to reason that the future of the taxi and private hire industry is becoming dominated by the IT revolution.

Your despatch system generates more data than you probably know what to do with – but one thing most systems will offer is a means of measuring what your cars are doing – do they have a pick-up on board? Are they on the way to a job? Or are they heading back to base? And can the system juggle the cars around so as to allocate them to jobs in a smart way, thus minimising the unnecessary cost of dead mileage?

Dispatch's software provider Autocab, one of Britain's fastest-growing tech firms, is gearing its systems to help operators be greener. Chief executive Safa Alkateb said: "Autocab's Ghost Booking and Dispatch system has a range of features, designed to help promote green fleets and reduce emissions. With a cloud-based system, customers can run their business over the internet, reducing the need for machines and hardware systems."

He continued: "Algorithms and settings within our Ghost system are also designed to help with the reduction of emissions. With live driver location on Ghost, customers can check on the status and progress of any driver in an instant. This means that when a taxi customer places a booking, they will be automatically allocated to the nearest driver to their pickup point. Not only does this ensure that customers are provided with quick and efficient service, but it also helps to reduce dead mileage."

Alkateb added: "Our Phantom phone system is also helping to reduce the number of dead miles, with our 'call customer', 'call driver' feature. By enabling passenger and drivers to speak directly to check on progress or location, the number of 'no jobs' can be lowered, and unnecessary mileage to 'no show' customers can be drastically reduced.

"As well as promoting greener fleets and reducing car emissions, our products are helping customers to reduce their paper consumption," he said. "Driver Onboarding, a new feature in our Ghost 11 update, has



Safa Alkateb

helped to eliminate the use of paper forms and boost driver recruitment. Customers who would like to become a driver can now complete the registration form digitally. You can take photos of relevant identification and documentation, which is uploaded and stored on their Ghost system."

One of Autocab's customers keeping it green is Manchester-based Street Cars. The business has a vast selection of hybrid cars on its fleet, which produces fewer emissions and improved mileage. With the help of Autocab's digital software and account system, the company is also able to provide paperless invoicing for its customers. These are all sent via email, saving money and helping to reduce unnecessary paper waste.

So, it seems that technology is fundamentally altering the way we work. The speed, depth and breadth of current breakthroughs is disrupting almost every sector in every country. Now more than ever, technology has the potential to change the business of professional driving into a more environmentally friendly one – saving time and money in the process.

Mark Tait



Autocab is not alone in offering eco-friendly systems. Catalina Software is also in the game, ensuring that the technology used by the trade today is fit for purpose tomorrow. The company implements, supports and enhances logistics solutions for executive car operators, couriers, and distribution networks.

Catalina's main product, Freedom, is a leading logistics software solution, enabling businesses to plan, manage and carry out the entire logistics process. According to Catalina, this helps to improve efficiency, optimises resources and reduces administration.

Focusing on the green aspects this technology brings to the industry, Catalina founder Graeme Whiting said: "It is important to recognise that green credentials can encompass a wide variety of areas of a business – it is not only about vehicle CO2 and dead mileage."

He explained: "Your business uses energy in many forms, from lighting and power to paper and consumables. Every phone, computer, or air conditioning unit is powered by electricity that needs to be generated. Saving energy can be costly short term but delivers long term savings. Global initiatives to cut energy consumption were originally driven by the need to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, but have now switched to the environmental impact of burning fossil fuels."

Graeme added: "In Freedom, our latest innovation analyses the available worldwide suppliers, suggesting optimum suppliers based on their actual driving distance to the pickup, or for pre-bookings, distance to the pickup or drop location. This means that the optimum supplier can be pre-selected, reducing dead mileage."

He continued: "Freedom Assist for auto-despatch can handle limitless rules for booking to driver/vehicle optimisation, scheduling bookings back-to-back, and it constantly monitors ETAs and will re-schedule to ensure the optimum plan. This includes response to traffic information, or a single driver making slower progress than expected – and it will re-schedule follow-on jobs to the most appropriate driver."

Looking at the low/ultra-low emissions

zones, which are being implemented worldwide, Catalina's Freedom and Freedom Global products can enforce only allocating approved vehicles to pickups or drops within a restricted emissions zone. This avoids costly Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) charges in central London, while improving air quality.

And according to Whiting, Freedom Global allows operators to provide bookings electronically to suppliers internationally. He said: "Whereas traditionally, suppliers would need to print these bookings, Freedom Global allows suppliers to remove all paperwork from the process. They can utilise Freedom Global as a complete online dispatch system, even maintaining all their driver and vehicle records online. This, coupled with the Freedom Mobile app, allows GPS tracking and status updates sent from the driver, worldwide."

Indeed, Catalina's Freedom allows operators to send bookings to suppliers through a variety of electronic means, including email, SMS, API integration, Freedom2Freedom or Freedom Global. Even sending a booking via email to a supplier allows them to click through to a website where they can accept and then perform status updates on the reservation, avoiding unnecessary phone calls and keeping both the operator and passenger informed.

It has proved fruitful for the industry, as Whiting explained: "Customers have reported massive savings in switching to paperless customer invoicing and driver purchasing. Freedom not only helps with the invoicing process but allows an electronic review of invoicing and buying, saving on internal review paperwork. This extends to running any Freedom reports where users have the choice of output to PDF, HTML or Microsoft Excel as alternatives to printing."

In addition to electronic invoicing and output of all reports in electronic form, Freedom card processing was the first in the industry to support 'Level 3 card transactions'. This submits the invoicing details along with the credit card transaction, passing it seamlessly into the customer's expense management system. This is in addition to Concur integration for expenses management, which also saves



Adam Ross

expenses forms and processes at the end customer.

He added: "Our focus on business process modelling means that customers don't have to implement manual processes outside of Freedom, such as manual paperwork or transferring data into other systems. This approach is unique and propagates optimisation and efficiency. Freedom is dedicated to driving business processes, and with outstanding process management comes efficiency in all areas."

Meanwhile, Dever Software is continually enhancing its Dispatch booking management system. It does this to keep on top of the latest technologies and to help customers stay competitive – and green.

Director Mark Tait said: "Dispatch records the carbon footprint for each booking made. To do this, our customers enter the fuel type and MPG for each of their vehicles. Dispatch then calculates the associated CO2 emissions in g/km for the vehicle."

"For each journey made by the vehicle, Dispatch records the distance and calculates the total carbon footprint. Our

customers can then run a report to view the carbon footprint for their jobs over a specified period. The report can be run for individual account customers so that the data can be provided to customers who wish to understand and offset their carbon footprint."

Tait added: "Many of our customers carry out a lot of airport transfers,". "Dispatch includes an airport transfers report that enables customers to view all airport transfers in chronological order. This enables them to marry up drop-offs at an airport with subsequent pickups at the same airport to minimise dead legs."

Haulmont Technology is another company that knows a thing or two about keeping things 'green'. Based on years of experience as Addison Lee's software developer, it launched Sherlock – the next-generation taxi solution.

Adam Ross, technical sales and implementation manager at Haulmont Technology, explained the system: "Among other features, Sherlock assigns the best driver for any given job while balancing against the fleet. This drives up the efficiency of the entire fleet and in turn, reduces dead mileage. One of our customers won a Green Fleet award for using this technology to cut emissions by 33%."

Sherlock also uses something called Passenger on Board (POB) allocation. "This allows the allocator to consider drivers with a passenger on board for a new job," said Adam. "It means that a job may be allocated to a driver in POB status over an empty driver if they are more suitable. For example, if their drop-off is close to the new pickup."

He continued: "All allocation settings are entirely configurable, so businesses can emphasise the variables that are most important to their business, including the environmentally-friendliness of their fleet. What's more, there are configurable reporting options, such as the driver statistics report. This shows the ops team the average distance to pick-up and the average journey time.

Ross added: "Additionally, we are evaluating electric vehicle support, including factoring vehicle range and local charging point information into allocation decisions."

Graeme Whiting

