



Fleet Manager's Guide to Impactful Driver Coaching Conversations



When running a successful fleet operation, driver coaching and training are essential to maintaining a robust fleet safety program. Driving safety broadly and universally impacts fleets across industries.

AI-driven smart dash cams facilitate impactful coaching conversations with your drivers and help develop effective training programs by capturing critical driving events, including sudden acceleration, harsh braking, speeding, distracted driving, and more. Event footage provides valuable insights into driver behavior and helps fleet managers identify areas for improvement.

Taking the time to implement a comprehensive driver coaching program can benefit your fleet operation by:

- Boosting driver retention
- Minimizing risky driving behaviors
- Preventing avoidable accidents
- Reducing unplanned repair and maintenance costs
- Heightening operational efficiency
- Improving CSA scores
- Exercising more control over insurance premiums

How to Have Impactful Coaching Conversations with Drivers

Successful driver coaching conversations are founded on coaching best practices that facilitate open communication and create a supportive environment where drivers don't feel attacked or judged.

Tailoring driver coaching sessions to meet individual driver needs is crucial for an effective program. While a generic approach to training may be convenient, it may be less effective, mainly when dealing with drivers with long-standing habits that may be detrimental to safety. Customized driver coaching, using telematics data to identify individual driver needs, is a better approach to promoting safety within your fleet.

Communicating expectations, regularly reviewing video clips of incidents, implementing effective corrective plans, and incentivizing responsible driving all foster a safe driving culture and team buy-in.



Set Expectations & Policies

Establish clear expectations and policies before conducting coaching sessions with your drivers. “The benefit of setting clear and specific policies is alignment. Alignment of the employees to the performance standard and what is expected of them. The clearer the standard you set, the easier it is to follow and remain aligned moving forward for the individual and the team,” said Monica Van Berkel, Chief People Officer at CalAmp. Be sure to communicate what qualifies as your fleet’s acceptable and unacceptable driving behaviors. Align expectations upfront and ensure drivers understand what is expected of them so no one is caught off guard when feedback is delivered.

1 Define the behaviors

Start by identifying the specific driving behaviors you want to encourage or discourage. These may include excessive speed, hard braking, distracted driving, or not using turn signals.

2 Develop a policy

Create a written policy that clearly outlines your expectations for your drivers. The policy should also detail the consequences of failing to meet these expectations.

3 Communicate the policy

Communicate it clearly to all your drivers – newly hired and existing drivers. Consider holding a meeting or training session to review the policy in detail and answer any questions drivers may have.

4 Enforce the policy

It's essential to enforce the policy consistently and fairly across your entire fleet. Consider implementing a driver rewards program to incentivize top performers. Doing so helps establish a safety and accountability culture among your drivers.

5 Monitor and adjust

Finally, regularly monitor your drivers' behavior and adjust the policy as needed. Use data and feedback from drivers to identify areas where improvements can be made and adjust the policy accordingly.

Every company has unique safety concerns, and a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. Trying to rework another company's fleet safety program by making minor adjustments might lead to friction and unnecessary coaching sessions on irrelevant issues. Instead, gather feedback from your team, monitor your drivers' behavior, or survey your drivers to understand better which areas to focus on for your company.

Setting clear expectations is a critical first step in creating successful driver coaching conversations. Both managers and drivers must understand their responsibilities and what is expected of them. Doing so makes the program a shared commitment, making it easier to implement and sustain over time.

"We all want to be part of a winning team. It's in our nature to want to achieve our goals, so setting clear expectations for the job and articulating why these standards are important helps provide context for employees. When employees understand why expectations are important, it can help them see the bigger picture and feel like their role in the company matters. Establishing reward and recognition programs aligned to your performance standard can also help reinforce the desired behavior," said Van Berkel.

Clear expectations also provide a foundation for open communication and feedback between fleet managers and drivers, essential for identifying improvement areas and maintaining a safety culture.

Establish Review Frequency

Review driver behavior regularly, whether monthly or quarterly, to track progress and identify areas for improvement. However, the frequency of the reviews may vary depending on the fleet's needs and the coaching program's specific goals. In some cases, you may need to review driver behavior more frequently, such as after an accident or if there are concerns about a particular driver's behavior. How frequently you review driver behavior is specific to your business needs.

Once again, transparency with your drivers about the process fortifies a culture of safety within your fleet.

Configure Alerts & Reports Correctly

Recipients of alerts and reports when a key driving event has occurred may vary depending on organizational priorities. However, some common stakeholders include fleet managers, safety managers, HR departments, and drivers. Work with your team to determine what works best for you and know this isn't set in stone and can be easily modified later.

In addition to who receives driver activity notifications, it's important to establish the when and how. Depending on your business needs, some fleets may only want alerts during working hours, while others want them around the clock. Reports can be scheduled or generated on-demand, so fleets may treat those differently than alerts. Alerts can typically be triggered via email or SMS text message (or both). Decide which format works best for your team and business needs.



Curate Clips to Use During Reviews

With the foundation set for impactful driver coaching conversations, you must prepare for the meetings where the driver behavior review will occur. Pull the relevant video clips to reference with each driver based on the review schedule you have already determined. The goal is to facilitate evidence-based conversations with actionable takeaways.

There are a few approaches to consider for your review sessions:

Approach **1** : Review all recently triggered driver events, regardless of severity

Pros

- Provides a comprehensive view of a driver's behavior over a period of time, which can help identify patterns and trends that may not be apparent by only reviewing some events.
- Sends a message to drivers that all driving behaviors are important and reinforces the company's commitment to safety.

Cons

- Can be time-consuming and impractical for larger fleets or those with limited resources.
- Can be overwhelming for drivers to receive feedback on every event, especially if some are minor and do not require immediate action. This could result in feedback fatigue and reduce the effectiveness of coaching conversations.

Approach **2** : Start with the most severe events (e.g., distracted driving, forward collision, etc.)

Pros

- Addresses the most critical safety concerns and potentially negative outcomes first.
- Helps drivers understand the most dangerous behaviors to avoid.

Cons

- May overlook other important behaviors that contribute to safety.
- May create a negative tone if drivers are confronted with only severe incidents.

Approach **3** : Prioritize the most frequent events

Pros

- Focuses on reoccurring driving events that violate policy.
- Can save time by prioritizing areas of improvement rather than going through a complete drive review.

Cons

- May overlook less critical but still essential driving skills.
- Drivers may not fully understand why certain skills are prioritized over others.

You do not have to be a purist in your approach. Instead, you may find a combination of these approaches works well depending on the driving behavior, your fleet's goals, and individual drivers' goals.

Facilitate Constructive Review of Video Clips

Create a safe space for you and your driver to discuss the video clips chosen for review. Make it clear why you are providing this feedback – this is an effort to improve safety and efficiency, not a personal attack on their competency. Here are several tips to help you have constructive conversations:

- Stick to the facts and avoid making assumptions or judgments about your driver's behavior.
- Note what the driver did well before addressing areas for improvement.
- Reference specific incidents or behaviors captured on the video to illustrate points and offer suggestions for improvement.
- Open a dialogue with the driver and allow them to provide additional context for events. Ask the driver to reflect on their behavior and thought processes during the incident and encourage them to contribute their ideas for improvement. "I find that one of the hardest things as a leader is to be slow to speak and quick to listen," Van Berkel said. "We have experience and thus we have answers. But be sure to engage the employee in the coaching session by asking them for their ideas for improvement and the goals they want to achieve. The more input they have, the more invested they will likely be in succeeding. Also, when discussing opportunities for improvement, frame their need for improvement in terms of how it can positively impact the department and the organization as a whole."
- Be aware of traps that may impact your ability to remain neutral in evaluating a particular event:
 - Certain events like harsh braking, cornering, and lane drift may not always indicate behavior for which your driver is at fault. It's always possible that a poor driving event happens in response to another vehicle's behavior on the road.
 - Excessive speeding may require more investigation to understand its root cause. Is it because the driver feels rushed, or do other external factors need to be addressed? Approach the conversation with a problem-solving mindset.
- Explain to the driver where they currently stand in the driver scorecard/ranking (if you're using one) and what factors into that score so they know how to improve.

Design a Path to Improvement

Once the video clips are reviewed, work together to design and implement a path for improvement. The plan should be actionable and measurable. Have periodic check-ins if drivers have questions in between review cycles. Some effective goal examples include:

Goal	Goal	Goal
Decrease the number of harsh braking events by 10% by the following review cycle.	Have fewer than two distracted driving events in the next month.	Improve your overall driver scorecard by 10 points over the next 60 days.

These steps can help you design and implement a path for improvement that allows drivers to improve their skills and behaviors over time:

- 1 Identify areas for improvement**
Review data from various sources such as telematics, safety reports, and driver feedback to identify specific areas for improvement.
- 2 Set goals**
Define measurable and achievable goals that align with the areas for improvement identified in step 1. Goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).
- 3 Develop a plan**
Outline the steps needed to achieve the goals set in step 2. The plan should include specific actions, timelines, and responsibilities.
- 4 Communicate the plan**
Keep all relevant stakeholders in the loop, including drivers, managers, and supervisors.
- 5 Monitor progress**
Regularly use data and feedback from drivers and managers to identify areas where the plan is not working as intended.
- 6 Provide coaching and feedback**
Use a mix of positive reinforcement and constructive critiquing to keep drivers engaged and motivated.
- 7 Evaluate results**
Use data to identify areas for further improvement and adjust the plan as necessary. Celebrate successes and use them as motivation for further improvement.

Often, it's better to offer the carrot before using the stick. If you have one, incorporate your driver reward system to incentivize improved driver behavior further. When setting a goal for improvement, add an incentive to it.

Different drivers may be motivated by different incentives, so it's important to offer various options to appeal to diverse drivers. The collaborative coaching conversations will help to identify effective incentives for that driver. Additionally, ensuring that incentives are consistently applied and communicated clearly to all drivers is essential for fairness and transparency.

Some relevant and attractive incentives may include:



Prizes

A token to remember receiving for accomplishing a goal



Financial

Bonuses or other monetary rewards



Recognition and Praise

Can be public or as simple as a handwritten note



Training and Development Opportunities



Time Off and Other Perks

Van Berkel's perspective is that monetary rewards can be impersonal and typically provide short term ROI and/or low company loyalty. When there is no emotional connection tied to the cash award, the money is taxed, spent, and it's gone. Down the road, employees often don't remember what they got the money for or how they spent it.

Offering rewards that are personal to the individual has a much longer ROI. Gifting something more personal such as a new putter for the avid golfer, a new bike for the employee who loves the outdoors, or concert tickets for the country music fan, are thoughtful gifts and will leave lasting memories.

"I find the most effective plans are when employees receive more personal items," says Van Berkel. "I'm out fine dining with my family or horseback riding with a friend because I did well at work, and they recognized me. These types of gifts tie emotion to the reward, which has a lasting impact."

Another great option is to provide a point system where employees can go to a marketplace to purchase their choice of electronics, sporting goods, wearables, jewelry, or travel certificates, etc. Giving employees choice in their awards is an important engagement tool.

The Bottom Line: Effective Driver Coaching Benefits the Entire Fleet




Effective driver coaching conversations are essential to improving the safety and efficiency of your fleet. Following the steps outlined in this guide, you can establish clear expectations, review critical events with your drivers, and work together to create a path for improvement.

Coaching conversations should always be evidence-based, actionable, and focused on safety, not personal attacks on driving skills. With consistent coaching and training, you can develop a safety culture within your fleet that benefits everyone.

Take the time to implement a comprehensive driver coaching program. You will see the benefits of safer driving habits, better CSA scores, improved driver retention, and lower insurance premiums.

CalAmp offers a broad portfolio of fleet management and safety solutions. CalAmp Vision, our AI-driven smart dash cam solution, helps facilitate driver coaching conversations and boost overall fleet safety. Interested in learning more about CalAmp Vision dash cams? [Click here.](#)

A photograph of two men, one bald and one with dark hair, both smiling and standing in front of a white vehicle. The image is faded and serves as a background for the text. A large teal triangle is on the right side of the page.

About CalAmp

CalAmp (Nasdaq: CAMP) provides flexible solutions to help organizations worldwide monitor, track and protect their vital assets. Our unique combination of software, devices and platform enables over 14,000 commercial and government organizations worldwide to increase efficiency, safety and transparency while accommodating the unique ways they do business. With over 10 million active edge devices and 275+ issued or pending patents, CalAmp is the telematics leader organizations turn to for innovation and dependability. For more information, visit calamp.com, or LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or CalAmp Blog.

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