



(((Telematics systems need to be integrated with software systems to achieve full effect.)))

'This removes costly back-office labour and administration by automatically capturing and transmitting the data required to generate workflows, maintain HR records and create invoices.'

For fleets to realise cost-saving benefits from telematics, the system needs to be properly implemented, according to Eagle-i Telematics. Earlier this year, the company set up its consulting division, EI Consulting, to help fleet customers realise the full benefits of installing telematics systems of any make, and to show them how to maximise the returns from adopting an integrated telematics approach, which can deliver ROI multiples of five to eight times the initial investment.

Head of EI Consulting Simon Jackson said: 'One of our key objectives is to deliver value for our customers. To do this we need to help companies understand how to properly use a telematics systems and the information it generates. A structured process and managed implementation will not only maximise the ROI but will accelerate its delivery.'

'For example, for a system costing £30 per vehicle per month, it is possible to deliver net savings of £150-plus per month. For a fleet of 50 vehicles, this can translate to savings in excess of £90,000 per annum.'

While there are a number of reasons for deploying vehicle telematics, high fuel prices are currently a major deciding. That's the view of Brian Martin, UK sales manager at Wylless, who says that fuel prices will continue to increase, as the world faces increased demands and growing concerns about climate change. He comments: 'Every fleet operator can and should recognise these external

issues to some degree. Recognition of these problems can be built into the fleet operation and policy, and a significant and positive contribution can be offered to offset both costs and the environmental impact.'

David James, CEO of mxData, adds: 'This is when telematics within intelligent transport systems really come into their own. Fleet managers are actively trying to combat rising costs but their efforts can be worthless if they can't get real-time information directly into the hands of drivers while they are on the road. Only then can drivers make an informed choice about the best routes to take and when. Otherwise resources are wasted.'

And, of course, hand in hand with reduced fuel consumption comes a reduced carbon footprint. Matt Hague, product director, at Microlise, comments: 'Whichever side of the fence you may sit regarding the impact of carbon emissions on the environment, it makes commercial sense for a company to reduce its carbon footprint as much as possible, not least because of the crippling impact of today's rapidly escalating fuel costs.'

'Using sophisticated telematics, managers can, coupled with simple but effective operational policies, improve the routes drivers take as well as undertake any necessary training to help correct driving styles that impact on fuel use. With this in place companies can expect to typically report between 7 per cent and 11 per cent improvements in fuel usage.'

CMS SupaTrak's EcoTrak product can also reduce fuel costs for fleets, as well as providing tracking functionality. Managing director Jason Airey says that the system can allow fleet operators to measure actual fuel usage

and carbon emissions of each journey by recording and reporting on vehicle management parameters, resulting in typical savings of up to 10 per cent on fuel costs. He adds: 'In addition, CMS SupaTrak has recently launched EcoTrak+. This proven fuel reduction technology saves on average 10 per cent of fuel costs, by simply remapping the vehicle's engine management software with a brand-new, TUV-approved economy tune prioritised file. When used in conjunction with standard EcoTrak, fuel savings of up to 20 per cent can be realised.'

Telematics can also help save costs through its tracking abilities, as shown by ALD Automotive's ProFleet2. Although this system was chiefly designed to enable companies to manage their duty of care obligations, it is also delivering tangible gains in vehicle theft costs. Fitted to more than 15,000 cars and vans on ALD Automotive's fleet of over 47,000 vehicles, the technology has enabled the police to return stolen company cars worth almost £500,000 to their drivers, including six vehicles taken from O2.

ALD Automotive marketing director David Yates said: 'Vehicle theft can obviously impact on fleet insurance premiums so companies that lease vehicles from ALD with the system fitted are clearly guarding against such costs raises. And, for businesses such as O2 that self-insure there are clear tangible financial savings as any losses that have to be paid out impact on the company's bottom line.'

'The technology is therefore both helping to combat vehicle crime as well as keeping costs down and improving efficiency for fleets and their drivers.'