



Maximizing Value from Fleet and Asset Tracking Systems

A white paper exploring the challenges fleet operators face in maximizing value and ROI from their mobile workforce management system

Companies that purchase mobile workforce management systems usually do so with a tremendous amount of excitement. The technology and capabilities offered by these systems is astonishing, especially to companies that have never been exposed to it.

The first time fleet managers see their vehicles on a screen is a “wow” moment for most of them as they realize the potential offered by this increased visibility into field operations. Unfortunately, this excitement and enthusiasm often wear off quickly. This is especially true for businesses that purchase a system just to address one specific issue, like eliminating driver speeding or other unwanted driver practices.

To realize the full potential of their investment in mobile workforce management systems, companies must actively and continually use those systems, and they must be supported in doing so. For companies that don't use their systems to the fullest, the ramifications are greater than negative ROI:

- Fleet managers may feel dissatisfied and disillusioned, believing they purchased a system that doesn't deliver on their expectations.
- Fleets must contend with fragmented processes, wasted resources and unreliable data.
- Dissatisfaction may lead to higher operational costs (wasted fuel, overtime, etc.) and greater reputation risk (undesirable driver behavior, poor customer service, etc.).

You don't have to live with disappointment, though. By choosing the right mobile workforce management system and provider for your fleet, you will be able to maximize the return on your investment.



Common Missed Expectations

For fleet operators, a mobile workforce management system purchase is often an exercise in expectation versus reality. Some common examples include:

- You expected: Customer support to help you understand the system you purchased, in order to get the most out of it.
- You got: Fragmented and unresponsive service, sometimes not hearing from the service provider until contract renewal time rolls around.

- You expected: Dependable GPS service with no system downtime, reliable data transmission, and a fully functioning product with many useful features.
- You got: System crashes and inaccurate data, making operations difficult if not impossible.

- You expected: Reports based on your tracking data (even integrated with your back-office systems) that guide your business decisions.
- You got: A service provider more interested in moving on to the next sale than in helping clients integrate, understand, and use their tracking data.

Obstacles to Maximizing Value from Your GPS Solution

These disappointing experiences can be traced back to a handful of contributing factors—all of which ultimately lead to low or negative return on a GPS investment.

1. A lack of service after the sale.

Many providers give fleet operators little more than a login ID and password, expecting them to be able to decipher all of the system's features on their own. Most users would benefit from some hands-on training from the provider in order to fully understand all the system's capabilities.

Unfortunately, many providers put little emphasis on customer service after the sale – once they have a fleet locked into a long-term contract, they don't feel a need to help the customer maximize ROI. Even providers that do offer training tend to not be proactive problem-solvers. Instead of reaching out to businesses to see how successfully they're using the GPS, they sit back and wait for their customers to contact them with questions or concerns.

2. Unreliable technology and data.

Mobile workforce management systems are only as good as the data they provide to the companies using them. System crashes leave users operating in the dark, while inaccurate data leads to faulty and ineffective decision-making.

In a worst-case scenario, a business may have to halt operations until it can get more accurate and timely information about what's happening out in the field. As any fleet manager knows, sidelined vehicles cost the company by the minute.

A break in operations can lead to a host of problems: lost productivity, scheduling delays, and unhappy customers, to name just a few. As a result, some mobile workforce management systems simply are not suitable for mission-critical operations.



Good data is vital. It can:

- Clear up disputes and earn fleets a reputation for responsiveness and professionalism.
- Allow fleet managers to monitor fleet and driver performance and costs across all field activities.
- Enable companies to create benchmarks and improve overall efficiency.

A tracking system that provides unreliable data or unusable reports is of no use to a company with a fleet or mobile workforce.

3. A lack of system integration.

Traditionally, mobile workforce tracking systems tracked only the vehicle itself. But today's technology should go beyond the vehicle to track the individual driver and provide capabilities that make mobile employees more productive in the field.

Tracking drivers allows fleet operators to identify and combat unsafe or inefficient driving behaviors, regardless of which vehicle is involved. When data from the tracking system is integrated with back-office payroll, timekeeping, and accounting systems, fleet operators can also identify discrepancies and patterns in hours worked, productivity, job times, and more.

Unfortunately, some system providers lack either the capacity or the willingness to integrate their systems with their clients' back offices. They are more interested in "churning and burning" subscribers than they are in helping their clients get the most value out of their system.

4. Contract rigidity.

Often, fleet operators are locked into rigid multi-year GPS service contracts that don't take into account their unique needs, like seasonality and budgetary concerns. Once a fleet implements a tracking system, the next step is often to learn and use as many features as possible to improve operations.

If the company does not receive dedicated, ongoing customer support to help them maximize their system use, however, they can't simply drop the system and look for another provider: they're stuck in a long-term contract with no way out.

5. Buying a system solely on the basis of price.

Many fleet operators (especially first-time GPS buyers) purchase a tracking and workforce management system to solve one specific problem, such as improving delivery times. The natural inclination is to find the cheapest system with the required problem-solving functionality.

Unfortunately, once the problem is solved, these companies do nothing to deepen their use of the tracking system. This is either because of inertia on their side, because the service provider does not offer adequate training and support, or because the system is very limited and doesn't have much more to offer them.



How to Overcome These Obstacles

In an effort to overcome these obstacles, companies sometimes appoint a current employee to become an in-house expert on their mobile workforce management system and to promote its use to the rest of the organization. This approach often falls flat, unfortunately. It's time-consuming (and therefore expensive) to learn and understand the system and its capabilities, and the champion must fight an uphill battle to influence company culture and drive adoption of the system...especially while still performing his or her normal job duties.

Here are five guidelines for overcoming these obstacles and maximizing the return on investment in your company's mobile workforce management system:

1. Choose a system provider that will deliver service beyond the sale.

You shouldn't get passed around from person to person. You should be on a first-name basis with your own rep who provides on-site training upon system installation, and is available to answer your call when problems arise.

Result: You will be able to focus more attention on your business and less on managing your GPS system, and you'll experience less downtime waiting for system issues to be resolved. With adequate training on how to use your system, you can improve operations in multiple areas of your fleet operations—and the resources you save there will make your GPS investment worthwhile.

2. Look for a system provider that will proactively engage with you.

You shouldn't have to be the one who initiates all the contact with your service provider. Instead, your provider should proactively reach out to you on a regular basis to ask if you understand all of the system's features and how to use them correctly. Moreover, the provider should suggest ways that your company could benefit from existing and new functionality.

Result: You will continually discover new applications for the system and new ways to leverage it to streamline operations, cut costs and reduce risk.

3. Find a system provider that will assist you with data integration.

Integrating your mobile workforce management system with your back office is critical to maximizing your benefits and system ROI. Make sure your service provider offers integration functionality and—most importantly—will help you implement it.

Result: Having integrated data about your drivers' hours, driving behavior, job times, and dispatch will enable you to make more educated business decisions. With a holistic picture of your drivers' activity in the field, you can set goals and benchmarks, identify and address problem areas, and improve customer service—all of which will justify your investment in the tracking system.



4. Insist on contract flexibility.

If a service provider only offers rigid, long-term contracts with no flexibility, look for another provider. Your service provider should be more interested in understanding your needs and crafting the right solution for your business than in locking you into a long-term contract.

For example, if your business is seasonal, you shouldn't have to sign an annual contract for multiple years. You should have a month-to-month option if you prefer it, and the provider should offer a money-back guarantee.

Result: You won't end up spending money on services you don't want or need.

5. Don't buy a system based on price, or to solve just one problem.

Instead, look at all the features a system offers and how they could benefit your company. Consider the full range of problems and issues a system might help you solve and calculate all the savings to determine your potential ROI. Look for a system that offers all the product capabilities you need—along with support services to help you make use of them.

Result: You will learn how to continually optimize your system to address your company's unique needs and solve your unique business problems.

A tracking system that does not have all of these qualities could result in:

- Wasted time, money, and savings opportunities.
- The inability to gauge (or achieve) ROI from your system.
- A lack of visibility into your operations to address issues and influence business strategy.
- Continued dissatisfaction and GPS provider-hopping.

Don't Settle for Just Any System Provider

Your mobile workforce management system provider will become one of your key business partners, so be diligent in your search for the right provider and system. Don't settle for a provider that offers anything less than the capabilities and resources discussed here. Otherwise, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to maximize value and ROI from your investment in a mobile workforce management system.