

Case Study 12: Anonymous Small Fleet Safety Consultant

Keywords: Training / Program Design / Small fleet / Other Organizations

For this study, “other organizations” are defined as organizations that do not fit in the other three categories (Transit, Trucking and Safety Organizations). The definition included organizations employing other types of professional drivers, as well as employees who drive for their work, but who are not professional drivers. Examples from the “Other Organizations” category can be helpful for all organizations who have the freedom and/or the need to implement new and creative ideas. They may also be helpful for those organizations who are growing and want to think outside the “standard safe driving” box to customizable proactive safety programs.

This example is a consultant providing targeted training and seminars on federal (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration – FMCSA) and state safety regulation compliance. The client base is primarily fleet operators of 20 vehicles or less. Training includes all aspects of regulatory compliance, including but not necessarily primarily safety. Typically in response to an audit (failed) or company evaluation requested by an insurance company. In other words, “roadside educated” meaning failed a roadside inspection!

The client based not limited to CDL holders, since FMCSA regulations are triggered by crossing state lines regardless of actual vehicle category. (e.g., inter-state if > 10,000 GVWR, but also intra-state is combination GVWR > 26,000)

Targeted training is provided in the form of a few hours of classroom / seminar to two full days of extensive coverage of all aspects of trucking regulations. The safety elements are basic “driver awareness” and are not overtly drawn from any existing commercial program of package. (For example, the principal is NOT Smith certified.) Described more as a targeted refresher course designed to address client’s specific concerns or problem areas.

Regarding format, the longer classes have substantial seminar / group participation elements to engage the drivers and illustrate that they are not the only ones with those particular problems. This is seen as particularly important since the emphasis is on regulatory compliance rather than driver training.

The size of client operations is a critical factor and determines the nature of the services and programs provided. Training and seminars are all reactive, in response to violation and (failed) audits. Safety culture is largely unknown. Where there is any awareness of safety culture, it is largely pro-forma, typically in response to insurance company recommendations / requirements (often in the form of posters, etc.).

When group introductory seminars are requested they are comprehensive and cover basic trucking operations (Trucking 101) as well as the regulatory requirements specific to the group.

They can also address specific targeted issues that are known problems (e.g., log book maintenance).

The bottom line is that these programs are virtually all reactive (to some violation or specific problem) and rarely pre-emptive. A function of size and business climate “scrambling for dollars”. Also due to the small size of the client base, monitoring technology (e.g., cameras) are largely not applicable and/or infeasible. They are often recommended for specific issues, but rarely acted upon.

Comments / Takeaways

- The challenges for safety programs for small independent companies are organizational and resource-based.
- They lack the “economies of scale” available to larger companies to develop elaborate safety programs. However, they recognize the importance of safety and by extension adequate safety programs.
- They explicitly recognize the need to adhere to the formal regulations, often via “roadside education,” meaning they failed a roadside inspection. Safety programs for this group are focused on meeting the basic regulatory requirements.
- These programs typically include all aspects of regulatory compliance, including but not necessarily primarily safety.
- The safety elements are basic “driver awareness.” The program is a targeted refresher course designed to address specific concerns or problem areas.