

Case Study 17: Anonymous Food & Ag Services

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At the highest level, trucking is divided into for-hire fleets and private fleets. Within that typology, fleets are divided into trucks (sometimes called straight trucks, meaning a single unit vehicle with no trailer) and tractors (the powered part of the common tractor-trailer “semi” commonly seen on roadways). Trailers are also included in fleet composition, counted separately. Within this typology, there are the various industries these fleets serve. Note that this typology is slightly different from the one used by the trucking industry itself, which distinguishes between truckload (TL, the entire load delivered to a single location) and less-than-truckload (LTL, the load delivered to multiple destinations, including but not limited to package delivery).

The idea and importance of safety permeates the trucking industry. Every company is highly aware of the business impact of any negative publicity associated with trucking. This is also reflected in industry trade publications where public image is frequently mentioned and discussed. This is in addition to the obvious legal liability and regulatory impacts surrounding safety. Broad comprehensive safety programs (beyond those required for the commercial driver’s license [CDL]) are a condition of employment in virtually all trucking companies. There is a heavy reliance on packaged/commercial safety programs, but with a wide range of modification, elaboration, and tailoring. In one form or another, the Smith System dominates the industry. Modifications range from adjustments in focus and emphasis, to radical restructuring of the basic Smith System elements. For example, one company has a staff developed extension of the Smith System dealing with close quarter maneuvering which is unique to their business, fleet and operation.

Given the critical importance of safety in image as well as in fact, and the requirement of safety program/training completion as a condition of employment, the possibility of terminating a traffic safety program is not an option. Only incremental adjustments and/or re-training/remedial training elements are conducted.

Regulatory compliance and sound business practice require that incidents, including preventable crashes, be meticulously monitored and tracked in the trucking industry. Metrics often include near misses and behavioral infractions (called triggers in Smith System parlance). The line between individual performance (a human resources issue) and program evaluation (refine or refocus) is blurred and somewhat subjective. The two merge completely with re-training, which combines elements of both individual performance and program evaluation.

While all trucking companies are diligent with regard to safety and safety programs, some are aggressively pro-active, incorporating safety into the business plan as well as corporate culture.

There is extensive on-boarding training provided. It includes the Marsh PACE system for accident avoidance. (Plan-Analyze-Communicate-Execute) This program is proprietary and is characterized as a more sophisticated version of the Smith System. The focus of the Marsh PACE system is accident avoidance through the key elements of the program (Plan-Analyze-Communicate-Execute). The goal of the program is safety in general, stated as “loss control” (reflecting the insurance industry history of PACE and the company). There are no formally stated specific program goals (such as “reduce crashes).

The PACE course consists of a full day of classroom training (primarily F2F) and another half day devoted to in-vehicle training (typically 2 rides with an instructor). The program is administered by Perdue employees that have themselves been trained by Marsh PACE (train the trainer). An abbreviated version of the course (approximately 6 hours) is offered on location. Participation and completion is required.

The company is heavily involved with vehicle technology. The PACE course is supported (not enforced – see safety culture comments below) by extensive Lytx / DriveCam deployment. Both PACE and DriveCam were implemented at least 10 years ago by the safety group.

PACE was adopted approximately 10 years ago with limited consideration of alternatives due to the corporate relationship with the insurance industry (Marsh). A National Safety Council based program and the Smith System were considered and rejected due to constraints on the material and a lack of flexibility. Factors in the decision included control of program elements, flexibility, and industry / consortium experience. The elements developed in house evolved from experience with the program. The current program is a slightly modified / augmented version of the Marsh PACE program as adopted.

Regarding wellness and drive health, the training and safety program is coordinated with the company wide wellness program, but not formally linked. There are wellness elements in the form of ergonomics specific to drivers built into the program by Perdue in conjunction with the DOT requirements and other regulatory requirements.

Regarding metrics, there was a prior annual audit of incidents by location following the introduction of the PACE system. This was subsequently discontinued once PACE became established. It is not clear whether this was an audit of location performance or PACE system performance. Currently there is incident review based on Lytx analytics. There is no formal assessment of the program. There is a periodic Marsh gap analysis which is an assessment of the functioning of the program. On-going evaluation is indirect, based on corrective actions and feedback into program in response to nominal trends (possibly subjectively defined).

Regarding safety culture, safety at this company is seen as a process, deliberately avoiding the term “culture.” Consequently they talk about the “Safety Process” as appropriate to and applied to the various areas within the company (ranging from assembly line agriculture food production to the fleet drivers we are focusing on here). In the latter, the objective is for the

employee to see the safety program as beneficial and not intrusive or burdensome. The intensive use of monitoring technology (e.g., DriveCam) and the training make this a challenge.

Comments & Takeaways

- *The safety program has been in place for some time. The immediate concern is with the integration of vehicle technology with the employee. The interface with vehicle technology is a recognized and publically stated challenge.*
- *The safety program is integrated into the fleet operations and the overall corporate concern with safety, reflecting the underlying and overarching corporate concern with safety in general.*