Beyond Installation:

Why Active Management Makes or Breaks an In-Cab Camera Program

Using fleet ops data to coach route reps creates a win-win scenario for companies, employees and motorists

By Russell Holt and Rusty Thomas

In today's litigious society, most businesses with fleets recognize the need for an in-cab camera program. However, many treat these systems as "set it and forget it" solutions. This approach often creates more risk than not having a program at all.

Before we decided to add both front- and driver-facing cameras to our fleet at Superior Linen Service, we spent significant time researching the pros and cons. Our primary concern wasn't the technology itself, but the risk of having a program and failing to manage it properly.

The Double-Edged Sword of Data

Insurance companies and legal experts often refer to in-cab video as a "double-edged sword." While video can exonerate a driver after an incident, it becomes a primary piece of evidence for plaintiffs if it reveals a history of unaddressed risk. When a fleet owner installs a camera, they create a digital "paper trail" of driver behavior. If that camera records unsafe acts—such as distracted driving or fatigue—and the owner fails to coach or discipline the driver before an accident occurs, the company faces high exposure for negligent supervision and gross negligence.

"I believe it is important to have a hands-on approach with our in-cab camera program because it's like with anything: 'Inspect what you expect,'" says Brandon Scantlen, regional service manager for Superior Linen's Western Division. "If you want results, you must be consistent. We don't micromanage the system, but we do monitor consistently, which creates accountability at every level. The expectation has been set, and that has strengthened our safety culture with our route service reps (RSRs)."

From "Big Brother" to a Culture of Care

Actively managing our camera program has significantly improved driving habits by identifying behaviors that could lead to accidents before they happen. For instance, through ongoing monitoring, we identified several drivers struggling with drowsiness.

By approaching these individuals in a supportive manner, many openly acknowledged their challenges with staying awake. We discussed sleep patterns and nightly routines, and with small adjustments, these drivers saw noticeable improvements. One driver, who previously received

multiple fatigue alerts, now receives none. He expressed genuine appreciation for the way the situation was handled. While not every driver responds this way, making a difference for even one individual makes the effort worthwhile.

Austin Price, regional service manager for the Eastern Division, notes that the evolution of the program required building trust:

"We knew there would be events we had to address with drivers with the in-cab camera program, just as we had when we first installed the telematics. For me, it is all about keeping our employees as safe as possible and ensuring they get home safely to their families after their shift. Another emphasis when reviewing the events is training and bringing things to their attention that they may not know were happening. For example, me saying to an employee to 'avoid distracted driving' is much different from me being able to show them the incident, explain why it was detected and how they can avoid those in the future. As for the evolution over time, I think in the beginning, there was a thought that Big Brother was trying to 'spy' on them. I believe we've shown that isn't the case. This was done through how the program was rolled out and how we have handled the review process over time."

Precision and Partnership

The transition wasn't without hurdles. When we first explored the idea, both drivers and some managers were resistant, viewing it as an invasion of privacy. However, given today's environment and past incidents that could have been resolved with video evidence, the system became a necessary step.

To ensure the program's success, we partnered with Fleet Hoster, a fleet management and telematics solutions provider that provides us with weekly reports detailing cameras that are offline or experiencing data issues. We also hold monthly virtual meetings to review violations that require clarification. These meetings have been instrumental; by asking questions rather than simply accepting the default settings, we have worked with Fleet Hoster to implement adjustments that better reflect real-world driving conditions. This collaboration has greatly reduced "false violations," allowing us to address actual events with confidence.

"Fleet Hoster's Coaching BI (business intelligence) coaching tool works with Fleet Hoster's dash camera and Geotab telematics solution," says Elise Haskins, customer success manager for the company. It converts safety and driving events into actionable coaching workflows. This system helped Superior Linen Service build a comprehensive internal safety program to actively monitor and manage driver behavior on the road. "With clear, actionable insights, their team can coach drivers effectively, reinforce accountability and maintain a strong culture of safety throughout their fleet," Haskins says.

The Coaching Process

Our goal is always improvement, not punishment. Yet we do have policies in place that are strictly enforced, including no cell phone use and mandatory seatbelt usage. When an event requires coaching, the supervisor receives a recommended plan and schedules a meeting. For distracted driving, we review the event with the driver to discuss the cause and offer recommendations to prevent it. For fatigue, we start by asking if the driver is getting sufficient rest. Those conversations have led to some drivers changing certain behaviors to improve their overall well-being, which resulted in a reduction in driver fatigue events.

"Any time we have to approach drivers when reviewing events that need coaching, we take each instance differently, depending on the coaching event," Scantlen explains. "It was 'new,' so there are always challenges when change occurs. Now, we have a good system in place for coaching these events. The overall process has been received in a positive way."

Communication is Key

After two years, this system is now an integral part of the Superior Linen Service culture.

Price emphasizes that the work is never truly finished: "I believe it is important for us to stay engaged with this program because, like with anything else you do in building or maintaining a culture, communication is key. Without that, I believe it will simply lose importance and fall apart. As leaders, we can't allow that to happen."

We remain actively engaged in protecting our company from potential lawsuits, but most importantly, we manage the system to ensure our drivers—and the motorists who share the road with them—get home safely every day. **TS**

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