

Fleet's Future Is Autonomy, Connectivity, Electrification and Sharing

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The pace of innovation is accelerating in the automotive industry, and new technology and fleet-management models promise sweeping changes for fleet managers.

The automotive industry is changing rapidly, driven by outside forces that will change the way fleet professionals and business owners manage vehicles and drivers. With equal parts technological advancement and human ingenuity, the coming years and decades will see the widespread adoption of new ideas and tools once thought to belong to the distant future.

Let's take a closer look at how autonomy, connectivity, electrification and sharing will change the shape of fleets and the role of the fleet manager.

1. Autonomy

Self-driving vehicles are not yet a fixture on city streets, but they are coming. In fact, to a great degree, they are already here — and not just in the form of the few vehicles with available “autopilot” settings. Technology designed to scan the road ahead and alert or assist drivers in avoiding forward collisions and unintended lane departures has migrated from premium brands to the mass market.

Seeking to resolve a patchwork of regulations governing the testing of autonomous vehicles in the United States, lawmakers there introduced the AV START Act. It passed the House of Representatives with bipartisan support in September 2017 but has met resistance in the Senate. Objections are chiefly related to safety. But industry groups have expressed fear that drivers could be replaced en masse.

The implications for fleets are clear: The more sophisticated autonomous driving technology gets, the fewer miles driven with human input and the chance for human error. Investing in autonomous and semiautonomous vehicles should improve fleet safety and reduce the costs of collisions and claims.

As the technology has advanced, a number of as-yet-unanswered questions have arisen. Will driverless vehicles cost more to acquire? Will their reduced risk lower the cost of liability insurance? Will regulations and infrastructure evolve to accommodate them?

However these questions are resolved, one thing is certain: Fleets will find themselves at the forefront of adoption and adaptation.

2. Connectivity

Telematics is helping to drive the trend toward more connected fleet vehicles. By tracking locations, speeds and risky behaviors such as sudden acceleration and harsh braking, onboard technology can produce rich datasets that can feed predictive analytics and logging devices.

The key takeaways are safety, compliance and capability. Advanced data analysis can help fleet managers target risky behaviors and develop safety training programs tailored to individual drivers. Electronic logging devices can track hours worked and miles driven, reducing or eliminating the burden on employees. Productivity can be further enhanced by driver-facing apps that can be accessed on mobile devices.

3. Electrification

Electric vehicles have been around for decades, but at no time in the past have they been so widely available in so many markets. The proliferation of electrics has been marked by a series of announcements from manufacturers and governments, all indicating a shift toward alternative powertrains and away from gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles.

This past year alone, Ford and Volvo, among others, have announced plans to expand their portfolio of electric-powered vehicles; Volvo took matters one step further by announcing an electric motor — alone or as part of a petrol-electric hybrid powerplant — will be built into every vehicle it produces starting in 2019. At the government level, Norway announced that all fossil-fueled cars will be banned from its streets by 2025.

4. Sharing

The shared-fleet model has evolved to include highly efficient, automated, paperless systems. These advanced solutions are catching on amongst companies seeking to maximize utilization. In response to the growing popularity of shared fleets, service providers have begun offering automated, paperless systems that use access cards or smartphones to facilitate the pickup and return of vehicles.

Ride-sharing, ride-hailing and pooling reduce the need for assigned vehicles at home and hired cars for business travel. By acquiring fewer vehicles that are driven only when employees need them, organizations save money on the front end and ensure applicable vehicles are returned to a central facility where they can be cleaned and serviced. Properly managed, a shared fleet can be an efficient complement to leasing and owning as part of the overall utilization plan.

The fleet industry is changing fast, and fleet managers risk being left behind. The fleet experts at [ALD Automotive](#) can help. Contact us to learn how partnering with a fleet management company can keep you and your fleet on the leading edge.

Interested in learning more about changing mobility services? Find out more in our dedicated White Paper [“Innovation in Mobility Services”](#)

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