Mobility Blog

Why – and how – is mobility changing so fast today? Here's a hint, digital technology has something to do with it

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Innovation in mobility is accelerating – and fast. Why now? Because digital technology is massively improving how we move, both in terms of cost and convenience.

Chief Digital Officer at ALD Automotive, Vanessa Govi oversees the company's innovative efforts which place a strong focus on collaboration, with product development based substantively on the active input of their customers. That means to start with the company's innovations are solidly grounded in customer wants and needs. This is so obvious that it's often overlooked: innovation is only relevant if it fulfils an unanswered demand.

So, where does digital acceleration come in?

Advances in technology are enabling new forms of usage and mobility solutions. One important area which is encouraging this is the sharing economy.

Take for example ALD Automotive's corporate carsharing offer. Instead of just offering company cars to a select circle of eligible employees, now they can offer access to shared company cars to all employees seamlessly through a digital platform. This would not have been possible before. Digital technology enables us to create a booking tool, to geolocate the vehicles, to monitor who is using them, to access the car, etcetera. This is a huge change for our customers.

Another example is ALD Move, which is our tool for improving the mobility customer experience via access to multimodal transport systems. Traditionally, the way you go from A to B is based on habit and/or necessity. ALD Move makes it possible to consider additional options and plan trips using various modes of transport, in addition to the commonly used corporate car. The platform is used to set up a profile with individual user preferences and offer personalised advice based on particular circumstances, like scheduled meetings, weather conditions and traffic. And we're doing this thanks to
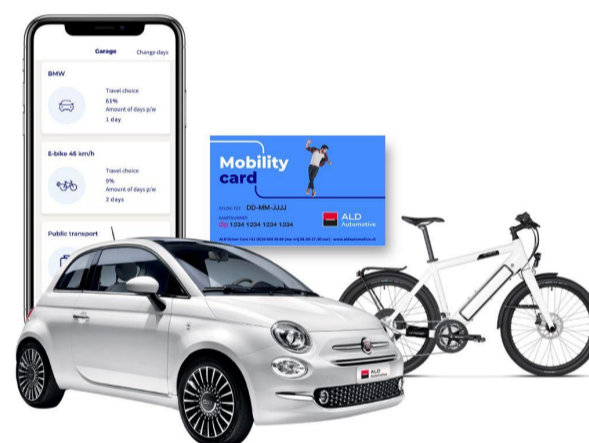
access to a wealth of data that was unavailable until very recently.

What role does data play in developing and transforming the way mobility works?

It's crucial. We collect data to help us understand actual usage. That helps us develop mobility strategies that can be fine-tuned to reflect and improve mobility behaviour at a personal level. Data can help develop scenarios depending on how a group of employees not only moves from A to B, but also individually uses their cars, in terms of driver behaviour. I'd like to stress, however, that while we do collect data, this data is anonymised and collected in full accordance with the EU's GDPR guidelines.

Improved analysis of driver behaviour can help corporates optimise usage – via carsharing, for example – and transition to a more diversified and electrified fleet, containing not just EVs, but also e-bikes, for example. Both exercises will help improve the entire fleet's TCO.

These gains are anything but theoretical. For instance, when we launched   ALD Move – co-designed with our customers – we were mindful to set objectives in terms of sustainability. After just two months of implementation, our customers reported a 12% reduction in their CO2 footprint and several employees decided to switch to an e-bike.

So, having a digital mindset can have real advantages for corporates, both in terms of employee mobility and the overall bottom line. But how do you spread that message?

We encourage our customers to experiment with the digital tools we have on offer. We want them to discover what works for them. Of course, we can also offer suggestions and recommendations based on our experience.

As I mentioned previously, mobility is often driven by habits. We have found that by raising awareness and incentivising mobility behaviour, employees tend to adopt greener and more cost-efficient options. Offering mobility credits, for example when achieving a reduction in CO2 output, is a good way to incentivise desired outcomes. Employees can then use those credits for mobility alternatives – or any other purpose approved by the company. This positive response to gamification thus allows a company to achieve underlying policy objectives whether they be sustainability, cost-efficiency or productivity.

Clever use of data helps us leverage our behaviour to change our habits, and actually make a difference.

If carsharing and multimodality are the big game-changers of today, where do you see the next frontier for innovative mobility?

Without a doubt, autonomous cars. This is still a long way off, but driverless mobility will be a definite game-changer.

In the meanwhile, there is a lot of work to do on multimodal transport. We have the task before us of making it as seamless, as convenient and as comprehensive as possible. That means we have to integrate all available mobility options into one easy-to-use platform. That's quite difficult, because mobility is organised at a fairly local level, and some modes are harder to integrate than others. Taxi drivers, for example, are not always comfortable with new technologies yet remain an important component in the mobility ecosystem and need to be included.

And don't expect full multimodality to arrive in the big cities first. It is likely to happen in smaller cities to start with – if only because the range of mobility options is somewhat narrower, and thus easier to assemble onto one platform. Also, some countries are more mature when it comes to multimodality. So

building multimodal mobility policies is something that will develop at varying speeds. We have our work cut out for us but we see it as a positive journey of discovery.

Final question. How will digital technology end up making mobility a more personal experience?

We are convinced that technology will and should make mobility more personal. It will help us to provide mobility plans based on individual preferences, and companies will want to offer personalised mobility options as an incentive in the war for talent. But really, we're in the middle of understanding the future. Together with our customers, we are working to build the mobility of the future with a digital backbone, that is both more flexible and agile than anything we know today.

We are ready to get it wrong from time to time, because that is the only way to get it right in the long run. And what is 'right' is something we will discover and define in close collaboration with our customers. It's their objectives that will determine the direction of innovation.