

'Catching the connectivity train': How to connect your fleet and reap the benefits

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As the connectivity and digitalization of fleets increasingly becomes a reality, ensuring you make the most of this opportunity has become crucial for the management of your fleet. Vanessa Govi, Chief Digital Officer at ALD Automotive, participated in a discussion during the 2022 Connected Fleets Conference in March, touching upon fleet connectivity, how to build up digital and technological capacity, and how to reap the benefits.

What is the return on investment (ROI) of connectivity for fleets?

The ROI of connectivity does not rely only on cost saving but also on cost avoidance and fleet operations improvement. All these elements must be taken into account when trying to calculate ROI.

It really depends on the size and type of fleet – however, we know in the industry that a connected car solution reduces both collisions and downtime by 20%. For instance, by reducing service down-time (av. 2hrs/driver/service at 20€ an hour) for 4 services over a 3-year 100,000 km contract, an ALD Automotive customer managed to save 160€ per driver annually.

How to determine what technology and what solution I as a fleet manager should select?

It will really depend on how far you want to go in terms of fleet optimization. Connectivity can serve for cost savings and safety, but it can also go even further and be part of the whole operational value chain of a company (delivery, maintenance & repair...). Dataset, frequency, accuracy and available use cases must be taken into consideration when selecting a technological solution.

Today's businesses have four corporate goals: Savings, Sustainability, Safety and Employee satisfaction. How do you see the role of connectivity in achieving these goals evolve?

In terms of the first goal – savings – connectivity enables the optimization of vehicle management, be it mileage monitoring, cost of energy, vehicle health, downtime/uptime management.

For sustainability, connectivity can definitely help on accompanying electrification and energy savings in general. Thanks to connectivity we can prove that some portions of fleets could already be 100% electric with no impact on company productivity nor driver experience.

Connectivity can also ensure great safety by providing information on driving behaviours and habits, to then supply drivers with advice on how to drive safer, as well more eco-friendly. Connected data can also identify the safest routes in real time.

Finally, for employee satisfaction, connectivity is a great way to offer a pleasant overall driving experience: not only safer, but also more comfortable (driving & charging assistance, route optimization, etc).

What is your key tip to ensure efficient roll out and implementation of a connected fleet solution?

'Catching the connectivity train' is crucial to ensuring you reap the benefits of connecting your fleet – but designing and implementing your connected fleet solution must be done the right way for optimal efficiency. Customers should select a single solution in order to manage their whole fleet from a single focal point, regardless of the brand, vehicle model, or source of vehicle procurement.

The right technology and service package should be selected according to the use case(s) that need to be addressed. The service should then be equipped and activated before vehicle delivery. Last but not least, inform, educate and reassure drivers about their data and its usage, ensuring formal consent is given by drivers.

What is the biggest misconception about connectivity for fleets?

That the technology would be used by fleet managers and employers to track and monitor their drivers/employees for purposes other than productivity and safety. Connected car solutions are not "snitches" – their only objective is to enhance fleet efficiency and to offer drivers an entirely seamless experience.

Where do you see room for improvement in terms of technology and why isn't it a fact yet?

OEM data is clearly where there is room for improvement. It would ease the technical implementation of the connected car solutions – it's supposed to be cheaper as well.

Unfortunately, not all OEMs have reached the same level of technology maturity, and the performance they can currently provide is below the performance level expected to complete certain use cases needed by customers.

How will developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) make sustainable fleet and mobility management smarter?

AI, ML and connected car technologies clearly pave the way towards autonomous vehicles. But before reaching that stage, AI and ML will improve the current capabilities of the connected car technology, taking optimization to the next levels through enhanced communication between objects:

- Vehicle to network (V2N)
- Vehicle to infrastructure (V2I)
- Vehicle to vehicle (V2V)
- Vehicle to cloud (V2C)
- Vehicle to pedestrian (V2P)
- Vehicle to device (V2D)
- Vehicle to grid (V2G)

They also open up tons of new opportunities for smart mobility in general, broader than just 1 driver vs 1 vehicle (optimization of vehicle utilization, optimization of vehicle charging, vehicle sharing, interoperability with other transportation means).

What can we expect from your company in terms of connected technology development with what concrete advantage for the customer?

ALD Automotive has defined connected car technology as a pillar of our overall strategy Move 2025. We want to leverage this technology to offer more added value services to our customers and their drivers, not only to satisfy the well-known needs in terms of savings and safety, but also to go further, notably on electrification, helping the fleet manager to electrify their fleets, and assisting drivers in having the best EV driving experience overall.

Connectivity and data allow us to better understand customer needs, so we are preparing ourselves to offer more specific services, customized to certain types of fleets or certain use cases where connectivity is even more valuable for our customer operations.

Discover our ALD ProFleet offer [here](#).

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