

Maintaining Continuous Driver Performance Improvement (Beyond Year 1)

A Post-Webinar eBook



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Executive Summary

This post-webinar eBook is based on a webinar that explored continuous driver performance improvement within service fleets. At the webinar, leaders from Netradyne and Plastic Express shared how today’s advanced fleet safety solutions can gradually improve driver safety when combined with positive reinforcement, cue and reward cycles, and complete transparency between drivers and managers.

Readers will learn how these concepts work in practice, what types of results they can generate, and how they can implement a more effective driver safety program at their organizations.

About the Contributors

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How the Science of Marginal Gains Applies to Fleet Safety

The contributors began the webinar by discussing the concept of “marginal gains” and its relevance to the topic of driver and fleet safety. Popularized by James Clear in “Atomic Habits,” the principle states that small improvements across multiple areas compound into significant overall gains.

Fleet managers can achieve substantial safety improvements by making small adjustments across various operational areas. Rather than pursuing dramatic overhauls, the focus shifts to incremental progress in multiple safety categories simultaneously.

Netradyne’s data and practices demonstrate the power of marginal gains in practice. The organization developed a concept called the “GreenZone® Score,” which is a first-of-its-kind driver performance metric that publishes both safe and risky driving behaviors. The idea is to provide a detailed view of driving behaviors, so drivers can receive targeted solutions for improvement.

An analysis showed that every 50-point improvement in GreenZone® Scores correlates to a 15% reduction in accidents. When the average customer improves 150 points in their first year, this translates to significant safety and financial benefits.

Fleet managers typically see immediate improvements within the first three to twelve

months of installing cameras. As drivers adapt to the technology and coaching practices, they gradually show significant improvements.

Strategic planning enhances the marginal gains effect. Once initial safety areas, like following distance and speeding, show improvement, managers can set new parameters and focus on additional behavioral areas. Continuous improvement helps maintain progress and prevents drivers from stalling in their safety performance.

KEY SUGGESTIONS

- **Focus on incremental improvements across multiple safety areas to maximize safety improvement gains.** This approach amplifies safety reductions and ROI through small, continuous adjustments rather than relying on large, disruptive changes.
- **Use a driver score as a primary metric to track progress and motivate drivers.** Regularly monitoring this score helps identify small behavioral changes that compound into significant safety improvements over time.

“Improving just a touch in various areas really does add up. From our perspective, there’s a lot of immediate success in the first three to twelve months after cameras get deployed to a fleet. As the installation progresses and the drivers get used to the training and cameras, there is much more dramatic improvement.”

Kristin Tedesco, Associate Director of Marketing, Netradyne

Positive vs. Negative Reinforcement and Creating “the Absence of Bad Driving”

Traditional fleet safety strategies focus on correcting negative behaviors through punishment and penalties. This strategy assumes that eliminating bad driving automatically leads to better outcomes.

However, Netradyne’s customer feedback revealed an important insight, which Kristin Tedesco shared:

“When a system stops focusing solely on penalizing mistakes and instead recognizes positive behavior, it creates an environment where good driving habits naturally flourish.”

B.F. Skinner’s research on operant conditioning provides the scientific foundation for this approach. His studies compared positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and punishment to determine which method produces the most effective behavioral change.

The data consistently shows that positive reinforcement delivers superior long-term results.

Netradyne applies this principle through their core philosophy: “In the absence of bad driving, what fills the vacuum is good driving.” Rather than simply penalizing unsafe behaviors, their system actively rewards positive actions.

This creates a fundamental shift from fear-based compliance to engagement-driven improvement, transforming the driver’s experience from defensive to proactive.

The practical application appears in their driver recognition system. When a driver performs a positive action like allowing someone to merge safely, they receive accolades and positive reinforcement. The system tracks these positive interactions through scorecards and progress charts, making improvement visible and measurable.

These small victories create immediate positive feedback that reinforces good habits.

The result is sustainable behavior change that extends beyond mere compliance. Drivers develop intrinsic motivation to maintain safe practices because they associate these behaviors with recognition and personal achievement rather than fear of consequences.

KEY SUGGESTIONS

- **Replace punishment-based safety programs with positive reinforcement systems that reward good driving behaviors.** Research shows positive reinforcement creates sustainable behavior change while negative approaches only eliminate bad behaviors temporarily.
- **Celebrate small victories to deliver fast but meaningful positive feedback.** This enables drivers to get quick wins and start on the path to sustainable behavior change.

“Operant conditioning is a concept studied by [American psychologist and inventor] B.F. Skinner that examines positive and negative reinforcement, as well as punishment, to determine which method works better. We went with the positive reinforcement concept because we believe that in the absence of bad driving, what fills the vacuum is good driving.”

Kristin Tedesco, Associate Director of Marketing, Netradyne

Creating Habit Loops with the Cue, Craving, Response, and Reward Cycle

The contributors believe that understanding the mechanics of habit formation provides fleet managers with a scientific framework for sustainable behavior change. The four-step habit loop consists of “cue,” “craving,” “response,” and “reward”—each element working together to create lasting behavioral patterns.

The process begins with a cue that triggers the desire for action. For example, the smell of coffee could serve as an environmental trigger. This sensory input is a **cue** that creates a **craving**, which motivates the behavioral response of purchasing or making coffee, ultimately leading to the **reward** of drinking the coffee.

The same cycle applies directly to driver safety behaviors. When drivers encounter specific road situations, these serve as cues for positive actions. The system creates craving through the anticipation of recognition and scoring improvements.

The response phase involves the actual safe driving behavior, such as allowing another vehicle to merge safely. This positive action immediately triggers a reward, coming in the form of the driver’s “stars,” additional points, and visual feedback from the technology platform.

The critical element lies in completing the full cycle consistently.

“The cue triggers a craving which motivates the response, which provides a reward, which satisfies

the craving and ultimately becomes associated with the cue,” said Kristin Tedesco. “These four steps form a neurological feedback loop.”

Progress tracking through scorecards and charts makes the reward system visible and measurable. Regular reflection periods, whether monthly, quarterly, or annually, allow drivers to self-coach and recognize their improvement patterns.

As a result, drivers build stronger, lasting habits that make them safer. Safety compliance becomes an internal motivation for drivers rather than an external pressure.

KEY SUGGESTIONS

- **Design immediate feedback systems that provide instant positive recognition when drivers demonstrate safe behaviors.** The system requires immediate rewards to strengthen the cue-response association and build lasting habits.
- **Continuously introduce new safety challenges and parameters after drivers master initial behavioral improvements, like following distance.** Keeping the system fresh prevents performance plateaus and maintains driver engagement through ongoing skill development challenges.

“We listen to drivers and let them know that we aren’t trying to get into their business, that it’s all about safety. Now, they don’t want to drive without the cameras working. We can congratulate them on their score improvements, and if there’s a long-term trend of that score going down, we can work to understand some of the challenges at the fleet and terminal level.”

Dave Edgerton, Vice President of Environment, Health, and Safety, Plastic Express

What Leaders Can Do to Support Driver Habit Improvements

Fleet leadership plays a critical role in supporting sustainable driver habit improvements beyond technology deployment. The contributors identified five core leadership approaches that directly impact driver participation and long-term success.

1 Empowering staff forms the foundation of effective safety culture transformation.

Leaders must give drivers ownership of their improvement journey rather than imposing top-down mandates. This approach builds intrinsic motivation that sustains behavior change over time.

2 Asking open-ended questions encourages driver engagement and problem-solving participation.

Instead of dictating solutions, leaders who ask “What challenges are you facing with following distance?” create opportunities for collaborative improvement strategies.

3 Leading with humility acknowledges that safety improvement is a learning process for everyone involved.

Leaders who admit they don’t have all the answers build trust and encourage honest feedback about system effectiveness.

4 Being transparent with people about expectations, processes, and outcomes reduces resistance and builds confidence.

Dave Edgerton’s approach at Plastic Express demonstrates this principle by clearly communicating accountability measures while providing support for system navigation.

5 Creating feedback loops ensures continuous communication between management and drivers.

Regular reflection sessions allow managers to address concerns and drivers to share insights about real-world application challenges.

Dave Edgerton's implementation strategy offers a practical example of supportive leadership. He introduced scoring systems without individual names initially, reducing pushback while allowing drivers to understand expectations.

The key insight from both contributors is that successful safety culture change requires leaders who remain willing to adapt their approach based on driver feedback and changing conditions.

“For the first few weeks, we displayed drivers’ scores without their names, so they could see the system in action. We made it clear that we were going to hold them accountable for those scores, but that we were also available if they needed help. Whether they needed help accessing the interface or understanding the scores themselves, we were there to support them.”

Dave Edgerton, Vice President of Environment, Health, and Safety,
Plastic Express

KEY SUGGESTIONS

- **Replace directive management with collaborative problem-solving by asking drivers open-ended questions about their safety challenges.** This empowers drivers to address their habits themselves and allows them to give honest feedback to management.
- **Establish transparent communication systems with regular feedback between drivers and management about safety expectations and outcomes.** Clear expectations reduce resistance, while continuous feedback allows real-time adjustments and addresses implementation challenges effectively.

About the Authors

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