

From the Operator

Benefits are many says operator

There have been periodic gripes from certain operators who state that the fleet management systems they bought don't meet their needs. However, the other side of the coin from the systems suppliers is that many operators do not use the systems to their correct capabilities.

As far as Abdul Tayob, CEO of Bakers Transport is concerned, his system of choice - the FM3316 from MiX Telematics - works splendidly and he is getting real value for money from it. In fact better than that, he says, it has helped the company reduce overall operating costs by around 5%.

According to Tayob, the present system was chosen based on its functionality, running costs and quality of the unit's electronics.

Tayob says the system is used for live vehicle tracking, producing historic vehicle movement reports as well as examining driving style and performance while highlighting incidences of over revving, speeding, harsh braking, location alerts and so on.

"This system has assisted the company to improve both driver and vehicle efficiency and productivity which, in turn, has led to a significant reduction of the monthly fuel bill," Tayob says.

In this respect, he says the system is an extremely effective driver training tool. "I would go so far as to say that in terms of adding value to our training programmes, we cannot do without it."

In addition to the benefits listed above, Tayob says the FM3316 has made a positive contribution to

improving relationships with customers largely due to the improved visibility of the customer's goods in transit.

South Africa has some of the highest transport and distribution costs in the world and while more focused management and improved efficiencies obviously help maintain and reduce costs, there is a pressing need for improved collaboration between partners in the supply chain.

Increase R & D

Tayob says the MiX Telematics system is more than capable of assisting with this collaboration but this is not being fully utilised at present as communications between the warehouses and the trucking operations have not been finalised. The drivers are also still in training as to how they must "co-operate" with the demands the system makes on them.

Tayob adds that he is also pleased with the service he has received to date from the suppliers which he described as "excellent." Obviously, in this age of changing needs from customers, Tayob says local suppliers of fleet management system should increase their investments in research and development with the aim of developing more practical functionality that adds value to the operators.

"For example, we need a proper route coding facility, sms functionality, a camera system as well as cargo scan functionality for tracking and monitoring deliveries and pickups," he says.

New aspiring entrants into this market should take note of Tayob's statement that local suppliers should increase their investments in research and development (R&D) so as to meet the changing needs of clients. It's not a cheap road for a supplier to travel and the return on investment falls far out of the quick buck arena. Enter with caution.

That aside, it's amazing how far the industry has come since *FleetWatch* first began reporting on vehicle tracking systems back in 1993. Dare I say it: "And we've only just begun." □