

# How to improve driver and fleet manager relationships

By [Arnoux Maré](#)

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Driving long-haul is not an easy job. Long hours of negotiating traffic, roadworks and bad roads, as well as fending off fatigue and boredom, can take their toll on a long-haul truck driver. If drivers have poor relationships with their fleet managers, their job can get even more difficult and stressful.



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It is important to ensure drivers are not unduly stressed. Stress leads to a lack of concentration, which could, in turn, lead to driver error and even accidents.

“ *That's why it is important for fleet managers to create a balance between keeping drivers motivated and happy while remaining firm about deadlines and work schedules.* ”

## Harness the facts to build trust

Drivers need to know their fleet managers have their best interests at heart. Obviously, logistics companies need to keep their vehicles on the road and want their drivers to be as productive as possible, but this should not be at the cost of their health or safety.

A good fleet technology monitoring system can help fleet managers manage driver schedules more effectively.

A good monitoring system allows vehicles to be tracked and provides driver statistics, maintenance records and fuel consumption figures that can be harnessed by fleet managers to be more objective when assigning work or rewarding excellent performance.



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The better the reporting, the easier it is to make well-informed decisions. When fleet managers make fair decisions based on the facts, they build trust amongst their drivers, which is a critical component of a successful driver/fleet manager relationship.

## Keep communication channels open

While most employees in South Africa are expected to work a maximum of nine hours a day, six days a week, South Africa's Bargaining Council allows drivers to work a maximum of 30 hours overtime per week.

High productivity pressure in the logistics industry can put a strain on the relationship between drivers and fleet managers, resulting in absenteeism or a general lack of commitment.

While meeting delivery deadlines is important, it is equally important that fleet managers put themselves in their drivers' shoes. They need to have an intimate understanding of what is required of their drivers and the challenges they face.



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All the clients we outsource more than 5,500 drivers to, employ controllers to oversee an average of 40 trucks and their drivers. The controllers are expected to confirm routes with drivers as well as collection and drop-off points. Importantly, they must communicate with drivers on a regular basis to check on their well-being and levels of fatigue.

In fact, communication is critical. Fleet managers need to give drivers the chance to voice their issues and fleet managers, equally, need to communicate the challenges they face.

“ Effective communication is another way to build trust with drivers – something every good fleet manager should be adept at. ”

## Get the basics right

The most effective fleet managers are good team leaders. In addition to being able to connect with their drivers and understand their challenges, they need to be able to provide them with the support and tools they need to do their jobs properly.

Fleet managers need to provide a combination of regular driver evaluation and corrective training.



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Another critical component of the fleet manager's toolbox is ensuring drivers have the know-how and time to conduct pre-route checks of tyres, brakes, leaks and lights – in addition to the truck having been through the truck depot for fuel top-ups, tyre checks, mechanical checks and washing.

Ultimately, fleet manager and driver relationships are enhanced when both parties understand and respect their respective challenges.

It is important for both parties to find solutions that do not compromise the safety of drivers and road users on the one hand or undermine the success of the business on the other.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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