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Guide: How to choose the right digital solutions for your trucking business



Digitalization has a huge potential to drive down costs, reduce waste and improve the productivity of the trucking industry. Yet the prospect of adopting new technologies and ways of doing business can seem daunting. But this doesn't have to be the case if you can get a good grasp of your business, your needs and the areas in which implementing digital and automated solutions might make sense.

Here is an overview of some practical steps you can take today and the questions you should ask about your business.



Understand your needs

All too often with digital technologies, individuals and organizations get excited about digital solutions and their promised capabilities without understanding the commitment and resources it takes to implement them. So it is always good to start by asking yourself what business problem you are trying to solve and whether this problem demands a digital solution.

Also, this might not be the first time your business has tried to implement new technologies. In getting started, it is always key to identify the reasons a digitalization project failed or succeeded in the past. There may have been barriers like cost, a lack of time or knowledge. By working out what the barriers are, you can ensure that the technology is successfully used this time around.

How will digitalization add value?

One of the main reasons to adopt a digital solution is its potential to automate processes and reduce costs. In order to know which solutions add the most value, you need to know what your costs are.

- What are the areas of your business that you need to save money on?
- Which areas of your business do you need to improve?
- Are there any early 'easy wins' you can identify?

As there are likely to be digital solutions for every area of your fleet management.

Answering these questions, will help you to identify the key areas that will make the biggest difference to your business.



What insights can your original equipment manufacturer (OEM) provide you with?

Having identified the areas where digitizing could have the biggest impact, contact your truck dealership and ask what technological solutions and data insights they can provide you with. Your fleet of trucks is likely to be already collecting data and most manufacturers now have data solutions that could include:

Maps – including real-time vehicle positions, route planning and geo-fencing based on truck attributes.

Assets – including alerts, warnings and notifications.

Reports – including fuel efficiency, performance, environmental and safety.

Driver activity – including driving times and how the driver handles the vehicle.

Calendar – including details of next planned service according to service and maintenance schedule.

Workshop history – including a repair history overview.



Questions to ask when speaking to your OEM

There is no need to have a large knowledge of IT to choose the best platform for your business. After finding out what insights your OEM can supply you with, the key questions you need to ask are:

- How can your OEM support your operations and business needs?
- How do you provide the data?
- Do they provide connected services that you can understand and make decisions on?
- How easy is the integration to other existing platforms and processes?

Once you have access to more insights through services using different data, it's easy to see where further improvements can be made. Manufacturers have coaches who are experts at looking at the data and provide you with useful insights about your assets and their performance.

It's also worth asking your customers/ shippers if they have technological solutions that you can use. They are likely to want to have the same information as you about how and in what condition shipments are delivered and what efficiency improvements can be made.

Fine-tune your options

Once you have a good grasp of the needs of your business, your data and why you want to implement a digital solution, you can further define your options on the basis of:



- **Size of your company:** The general rule is that the more assets you have, the more meaningful data you will be able to generate. For larger companies with lots of assets it makes sense to invest in fleet-specific digital solutions that provide analytics and predictions tailored to a business. But for smaller companies it could make sense to turn to an IT solution provider where your company's data will be anonymized and analyzed together with those of other operators.
- **Security:** The first thing that should come into your mind when choosing an IT solution is security. How secure is the solution are considering? With concerns around cybersecurity increasing, it is important that you fully get a digital platform for your business with the right security credentials. You do not want the data of your customers or drivers falling into the wrong hands. To make sure you have the appropriate solution, only settle for providers with appropriate security certifications.



- **Ease of use:** A good digital solution may be so appealing on paper only for it to fail in practice. Just because an app or program seems to have fancy features does not make it usable for you and others in your company. When it comes to digital solutions, complex doesn't necessarily mean good.
- **Integration:** How well does the software sync up with your current processes and other systems? Having different solutions that don't integrate well can give you a scattered view of your data and even increase administration. Something as simple as separate log-ins or different user interfaces (UI) can make the experience of using digital tools cumbersome. When choosing a digital solution provider, make sure they are able to provide an integrated one-stop solution.
- **Experience:** As with any potential business partner, the industry knowledge and support a solution provider can give is extremely important. How long has the company been in business, and how long has it served the trucking industry?



How digitalization can help your truck business

Your OEM will have a technological solution that could meet all or some of your digitalization needs. For example, [Volvo Connect](#) offers a comprehensive set of tools to help improve the productivity of your fleet and drivers.

Below, I have listed some areas where digital and automated solutions could add value to your business:

- Accounting, planning and dispatching
- Driver and customer communication
- Storage and retrieval of files and documentation
- Fleet management, fuel efficiency and asset management
- Load matching
- Driving hours, rest times and parking spaces
- Highway access and tolling
- Fueling and related services
- Services for trailer handling and management
- Calendar and booking services for maintenance
- Load scheduling
- Vehicle inspection
- Driver health and safety

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