

Ecolab

Technology, data and direct coaching: a powerful combination in improving safe driving behaviour



Fleet: 550 (Australia and New Zealand)

Case Study:

Predicting risk to prevent crashes: How a safe driving app changed driver behaviour

Organisation: Ecolab

No. of drivers: 550



Key outcomes

- Combining technology, real-world data and direct driver coaching is a powerful combination in improving driving behaviour and much more effective than relying on technology-based solutions in isolation
- Driver coaching program is more effective when the driver and manager together identify and focus on improving one priority behaviour at a time
- While all drivers receive training, focusing direct coaching on the riskiest drivers has a greater impact on driver behaviour than routinely coaching all drivers
- Training responsible managers using real data from their own team that shows actual driver behaviour increases program engagement and pace of implementation
- Providing drivers with information on their risky driving behaviours can lead to driver self improvement, helping drivers learn and improve
- Extending safe driving messaging beyond work hours and reinforcing its importance in drivers' personal lives can help ingrain safe driving behaviours and a safe driving culture
- Executive leadership support is critical to the success of any safety measure.

Synopsis

When Ecolab wanted to take the next step on its road safety journey and move from being proactive to predicting and therefore preventing crashes, the company implemented a powerful combination of technology, real-world data and direct driver coaching. The results were immediate and sustained.



Introduction

When Ecolab's health and safety team considered the long-term strategic direction of its road safety program, it set a goal of predicting potential accidents to prevent them from happening.

The organisation had long been proactive in workplace road safety, using incidents and data as opportunities to educate workers about safe driving behaviours and help prevent repeat occurrences.

Ecolab began investigating whether a technology-based solution existed that could identify driver risk to predict who was most at risk of having an incident and intervene before an incident occurred.

Its research led to it piloting eDriving's Virtual Risk Manager program and its Mentor app, which has the ability to capture driver phone distraction and harsh driving events, and provide built-in video training modules.

A statistically significant 30 per cent reduction in crash rates after the six-month pilot helped the company move forward with the program.

After the initial program rollout in Ecolab's North American operations, Australia and New Zealand became the first international market where the Virtual Risk Manager program and Mentor app were implemented to help improve safe driving behaviours across its fleet.

Local results in the first 12 months replicated the pilot, helping to reduce the rate and cost of accidents, and engage drivers to further build Ecolab's safe driving culture.

This case study will briefly outline Ecolab's experience with the program in Australia, including how technology-based solutions have driven down accident rates, how Ecolab overcame driver concerns, and how the combination of the app, driver coaching and a focus on the riskiest drivers has proven to be a powerful combination that has delivered immediate results.

Organisation overview

Ecolab is a global water, hygiene, and energy technologies and services company, Headquartered in St Paul, Minnesota.

Predicting the risk

Globally, Ecolab has 24,000 sales-and-service staff on the road, visiting nearly 3 million customer sites in more than 170 countries.

That includes 550 drivers across its Australian and New Zealand operations, driving to multiple customer sites each day.

Safe driving is critical to the company's ability to serve its customers.

Rear-end collisions are one of its top causes of road accidents and a significant cost for the business.

Driver distraction is another workplace road safety risk. Driver distraction is predominantly due to mobile phones, including making or receiving mobile phone calls or interacting with messages or emails.

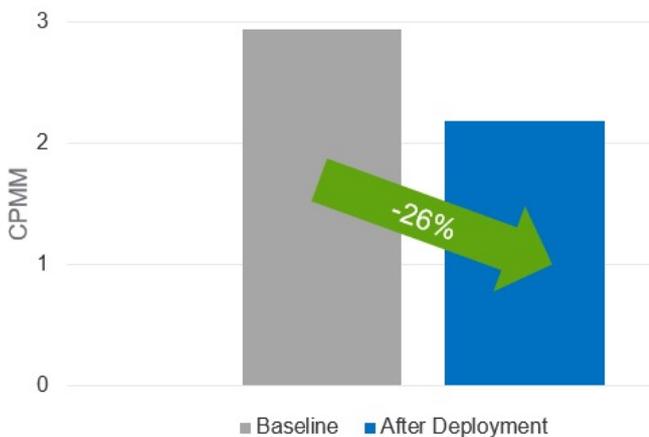
Ecolab had always been proactive in its approach to driver safety, but the Safety, Health and Environment team wanted to shift that focus to be "more predictive".

"Rather than waiting for an incident or accident to happen and then following up with training and talking to the driver, could we find a program that would allow us to use technology and data to give us a view of the driver's risk?" is how Ecolab Director of Global Driver Safety Heather Bass put it. "And then give us actual actionable information and tell us where to focus so we could act before the crash even happened."

"Rather than waiting for an incident or accident to happen and then following up with training and talking to the driver, could we find a program that would allow us to use technology and data to give us a view of the driver's risk?"

Immediate (and sustained) results

Ecolab Australia/New Zealand rate of Crashes Per Million Miles (CPMM), comparing the Baseline (1 January 2017 to the deployment, 1 October 2020) and after deployment (since October 1, 2020 to present)



Ecolab began investigating market solutions to achieve that objective, ultimately piloting the program, with the Mentor app as the central road safety feature, which focuses on driver behaviour.

When the program was piloted with about 500 drivers within one of Ecolab's North American divisions, results showed a 30 percent reduction in accidents per million miles in six months,

That was enough evidence for Ecolab's executive safety leadership team, including the CEO, to support rolling the system out first across North America and then internationally.

Australia and New Zealand was the first international Ecolab market to deploy the new road safety program, which has now been launched across Ecolab's operations in over 40 countries.

The program has been deployed in Ecolab's North American operations for three years and has sustained strong pilot results, reducing the company's accidents per million miles by 28 per cent over that period.

The reductions in incident rates and numbers have been replicated in Australia, with both figures dropping by 26 per cent since it was introduced locally.

eDriving's Virtual Risk Manager focuses on delivering behavioural insights and actionable intelligence to help organisations understand their driver risk, as a way to prevent accidents.

Its **Mentor** app uses smartphone sensors to collect and analyse positive and negative driver behaviours, including phone distraction, speeding and three harsh driving events – acceleration, braking and cornering.

The app generates driver specific reports and a FICO® Safe Driving Score, a predictive score that highlights the driver's likelihood of being involved in a future collision or incident.



Keys to success

Meaningful training

The training Ecolab delivered as part of implementing the program was a key reason in it developing such significant and immediate results, and in creating buy-in around the program.

When the program is introduced into an Ecolab operation, drivers receive on-boarding training to understand how to use the app.

Field managers, who have responsibility for drivers in their respective teams, receive additional program training, but one month after drivers have been using the app.

This approach means when field managers are trained on the program, the VRM site and reporting, and the coaching program, the data used is real data showing the performance and behaviours of the drivers in their own team, rather than fake data generated for training purposes.

Field managers can see the data generated from the real-world behaviours of the drivers they supervise, highlighting immediately the riskiest drivers in their team and key areas to focus on in one-on-one coaching (see next section).

To embed learning, Ecolab's approach was to provide comprehensive program and coaching training in the morning and follow that in the afternoon with tutorials focused on their own drivers' behaviours.

As well as allowing field managers to 'hit the ground running' with the app, Ecolab's training approach promoted buy-in from managers responsible for road safety and fleet drivers because they could immediately see the practical application of the system in their own daily operations.

“Field managers can see the data generated from the real-world behaviours of the drivers they supervise, highlighting immediately the riskiest drivers in their team and key areas to focus on in one-on-one coaching.”

Targeted coaching

Direct coaching by field managers with drivers is the foundation of Ecolab's implementation of the program.

Ecolab found that technology alone was not producing the results it was searching for. Combining a technology-based solution with direct coaching did. “That’s why we put so much emphasis on that manager coaching and the coaching sessions assigned to our riskiest drivers because that’s what we feel really makes the program work,” Heather Bass added.

Ecolab already had a consistent coaching model in place across the business. So, when that approach was replicated for the safe driving program, field managers already understood how it worked and what was expected.

The approach is based on field managers and drivers working together to create an action plan focused on addressing one behaviour, rather than attempting to improve multiple behaviours at once.

The pair agree on a specific plan and time frame and changes in behaviour are measured over the agreed period. The approach is based on the driver committing the action plan and putting new practices in place, and the manager commits to assisting and following up the driving.

The greatest impact

Direct manager coaching is assigned to the riskiest drivers each month to ensure efforts are focused on the drivers and behaviours most in need of being addressed.

Ecolab tracks completion of the assigned coaching for the riskiest drivers and holds field managers accountable to meet that expectation.

Coaching assignments are distributed at the beginning of the month and, if field managers are assigned a coaching task, they are expected to deliver those by the 15th of the month. This approach allows drivers to have the rest of the month to focus on improving that behaviour.

To help managers to prepare to coach a driver, three brief user-friendly reports are available to show why particular behaviours have been highlighted as areas for improvements.

These usually come as little surprise to drivers. As part of the FICO® Safe Driving Score, where a lower score indicates a higher risk of an incident, behaviours measured are categorised into red, amber or green, based on their actual driving. This also makes the data difficult to argue against for drivers, as it is based on their actual driving behaviors.

The app incorporates many brief training modules, making 3-4 minute videos on a range of safe driving topics accessible to drivers. While all drivers are expected to complete 14 of these 'microlearning modules' over the same number of months, those identified as the riskiest drivers are assigned weekly modules to address specific behaviours and reinforce defensive driving principles.

One size fits all

Ecolab prioritised a solution that could be consistently implemented across the organisation.

Inconsistent implementation across markets had previously not achieved the consistent reductions in crash rates the company was hoping for. Ecolab knew choosing a global enterprise program, with consistent implementation by the local health and safety team, would maximise effectiveness. This objective was also important to the company's Executive Safety Leadership team.

Another consideration influencing Ecolab's choice is the variety of landscapes its drivers operate in. Even within its Australia and New Zealand operation, driving risks vary widely.

In metropolitan areas of Australia's eastern states, for example, 'rear-enders' and constant braking and acceleration are bigger issues compared to travelling between towns in regional or remote areas, where highway speeding is more prominent and harsh braking may indicate avoiding an animal collision. The Safe Driving Report of an Ecolab worker, with dairy industry customers on the windy roads of New Zealand's South Island, is likely to highlight different driving behaviours when it comes to cornering.

While the system tracks the same harsh driving behaviours, because data is specific to the driver it will reflect the local conditions the driver operates in and challenges they face. If workplace road safety risks are widespread, such as distractions caused by smartphones, individual data will also highlight common challenges.

"The insights generated by the app assist our drivers to better understand their own 'on road' behaviours and encourage targeted modification for a safer journey" says Ecolab ANZ Health and Safety Manager Abbey Smith.

"As part of the FICO® Safe Driving Score, where a lower score indicates a higher risk of an incident..."

Driving acceptance

Ecolab reassured drivers the app only captured driver behaviour – and could not be used to track their location, for example.

One clear indication that the system had been accepted revolved around an unintended consequence of the FICO® Safe Driving Score. Unprompted, drivers began comparing scores with their peers, who usually completed the same work and therefore had similar risk profiles.

This friendly competition reinforced a focus on positive driving behaviours, continuous improvement, and effectively became informal peer coaching that supported the formal coaching delivered by field managers.

“With the use of the Circles functionality, there is definitely healthy competition between peers to improve their own FICO safe driving scores. Not only does this drive engagement but also supports a continuous improvement mindset” Smith added.



4 learnings to share

Some targets aren't negotiable...

The quality of the coaching delivered and meeting monthly coaching deadlines are critical factors in helping drivers improve specific behaviours. Ecolab's business-wide coaching model ensures a consistent high standard of coaching is delivered, while meeting coaching deadlines is a metric that is measured and an outcome field managers are held accountable to. Its importance is supported by analysis that showed drivers who received coaching on time had a significantly lower vehicle crash risk two months after their coaching session.

...but some targets are

While the app provides a FICO® Safe Driving Score, Ecolab has made it clear to its drivers and managers its safe driving program is not focused on achieving a perfect score. All drivers have an aspect of their driving they can improve, and the score is used as tool to help achieve the company's safety objective of continuous improvement. This message is reinforced through training and company communication about the safe driving program.

Executive support, common goals

Ecolab's move to predicting risk, and combining it with data and coaching, represented a significant change in how industry approached driver behaviour. This made executive leadership support critical in introducing the program and promoting buy-in across the company.

As well as ensuring they understood how the app worked, it was important to align all areas of the business, including drivers, field managers and executive leadership, with how the new system would help achieve safe driving goals, and the individual role they played in contributing to that goal.

Patience and persistence

Be patient and allow time for the workforce to accept a new system and understand how to implement it. It may take time for field managers to consistently meet their coaching deadlines, for example. Culture change, both in terms of daily practices and overall attitudes towards how business is done, takes time as well as persistence.