

Advocating for good practice in work-related road safety: the role of the road safety NGO

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Abstract

This paper will provide a background to Brake and its initiatives, including the Fleet Safety Forum. It will explore the many financial as well as safety benefits of investing in road risk management measures relating to systems, drivers and vehicles, as realised by members of the international Fleet Safety Forum, coordinated by Brake. It will also explore how, at the heart of the efforts to achieve these financial as well as safety benefits, is a social and cultural investment and change by companies in road risk management and the wider societal benefits of putting safety first. Finally, it will look at the results of Brake's initiatives in fleet safety, and more widely in road safety, alongside successful initiatives undertaken by organisations in addressing their road risk.

Brake's research and engagement with thousands of businesses, government agencies and other NGOs suggests that road safety should be at the heart of organisations' Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, and by doing this, organisations can achieve wider buy in from the shop floor up to Board level, as well as engaging employees' families and the wider community in a key issue that affects everyone from children to the elderly, and where organisations can be shining lights in achieving change. Case studies will be presented relating to many successful organisations that have worked with Brake's Fleet Safety Forum over the past 15 years, along with key achievements of Brake's work in this, and other areas of road safety.

Key words: road risk management; organisational safety culture; road risk interventions.

1. Introduction

Brake is an independent road safety charity. It exists to prevent road deaths and injuries through educational initiatives, and to care for families bereaved and seriously injured in road crashes. Brake runs awareness-raising campaigns, community education programmes and events such as Road Safety Week. Since 1995, Brake the road safety charity has advocated for improvements in work-related road safety research, policy and practice. Brake's international Fleet Safety Forum shares fleet safety research, advice, initiatives and best practice case studies, and organises events for fleet professionals.

Internationally, people who drive for work have higher collision rates than private drivers. At-work drivers tend to drive further and for longer than private drivers. Most crashes are due to bad driver behaviour and at-work drivers may take risks including driving tired, using a mobile phone or hands-free kit at the wheel or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Employers have a vital role to play in ensuring the safety of their drivers and the wider community.

2. Knowledge and evidence base

Recent research into occupational fatalities in a range of countries has highlighted that crashes account for 16-29% of occupational fatalities in New Zealand and 46% of

occupational fatalities in Queensland. In Queensland at work drivers are involved in 24% of road fatalities¹.

Brake's regular report, *At Work Drivers*, found that drivers surveyed who drove for work were, across the board, more likely to say yes to behaviours such as driving above speed limits in built up areas, driving the morning after drinking a lot of alcohol or when tired, driving while talking on a phone and driving while eating².

A 2006 study of agency drivers revealed that in one retail depot studied, agency drivers worked 6% of hours behind the wheel but were involved in 17% of crashes³.

A recent major review of work-related road safety in Australia has shown that there may be a 'work driver effect' that could be harnessed to improve road safety in the wider community. If work drivers could take safety messages home, employees' private driving would be safer and their influence on family members could be positive⁴.

Psychology research has shown that educating drivers about road safety and even successfully changing their attitudes doesn't necessarily equate to changed behaviour. However, if you don't know something you can't understand its importance, pass information on to others or respect your employer for measures they insist upon. An educational message from an employer may raise suspicion amongst sceptical employees, but one from an NGO in partnership with their employer, and supported by evidence from other employers and academia, is one of strength.

3. Initiatives developed and implemented

3.1. Fleet Safety Forum

Brake implemented the Fleet Safety Forum in 1995 as a not-for-profit service for fleet managers. The Forum provides members with access to the latest initiatives and research in fleet and road safety from around the world. It regularly produces guidance for managers on pertinent fleet safety topics such as driver distractions, managing agency drivers and safe driving in bad weather. Its *Showcase* contains best practice examples from companies that have implemented fleet safety policies and procedures and seen tangible results. The Forum also produces resources for drivers including advice sheets and posters.

3.2. Brake Pledge

Brake's Pledge campaign provides employers with six key principles for safer driving: slow, sober, silent (phone off), secure (belted up, using a safe and well-maintained vehicle), sharp (not tired or stressed and with regular eyesight checks), sustainable.

Employers are provided with some basic tools to educate fleet drivers on Pledge principles through the Fleet Safety Forum, including interactive resources like a Pledge quiz, morning after calculator, and hard-hitting videos from families affected by crashes.

However, to be effective, everyone within the company needs to:

- **know** the rules,
- **agree** with them,

¹ Murray, W., Pratt, S., & Dubens, E. (2011). Occupational Road Safety: Review of Work-Related Road Safety Research, Policy and Practice Worldwide (Draft).

² Brake and Green Flag, *At Work Drivers* 2007

³ Brake manager guidance, *Managing Agency Drivers* 2012

⁴ 2 Murray W, Newnam S, Watson B, Davey J & Schonfeld C (2003) Evaluating and improving fleet safety in Australia. Australian Transport Safety Bureau Research Report, www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/publications/2003/eval_fleetsafe.aspx

- **intend** to follow them, and
- **actually** follow them.

The latter three things require:

- a positive attitude; and
- the strength of character to make safe decisions in all situations regardless of other pressures or temptations or distractions, of which there are so many.

To embed the Pledge in a company successfully an employer needs to achieve this attitude and strength of character among all employees. This is just as vital as explaining the six golden rules, but potentially much harder. Many drivers make risky decisions despite knowing better. A driver's psychological make-up and consequently their decision making in any given situation can be complex. The Pledge course offered to fleet managers and driver trainers by Brake, online manager's guide and all the campaign's online and print driver resources have been carefully prepared to help employers recognise and successfully influence driver attitudes and behaviour.

When communicating the Pledge it is helpful to include opportunities for employees to air their ideas and any worries in a supportive environment. Such group discussions or one-on-one coaching sessions can help to:

- Embed knowledge
- Identify any individual with poor attitudes
- Improve attitudes through 'ownership' of the subject
- Create a positive culture and planned behaviour
- Answer previously hidden worries

So, for example, workshop environments that are carefully led and managed, but where drivers have an opportunity to voice their own ideas surrounding the Pledge and get group consensus about how to abide by Pledge principles, are better than simply having that information in a driver handbook that may be rarely opened.

3.3. Employee campaigning

Brake also encourages companies to engage employees in doing their own campaigning. This could be employee-led education campaigns in the workplace, but it could also be in the community, such as volunteering with groups of school pupils of any age to inspire them to run local campaigns on the Pledge principles, either educational in nature or political (such as campaigning for a lower speed limit).

3.4. Events and community activities

The Forum also runs professional events for fleet managers including seminars and webinars on topics such as driver tiredness, reversing and blind spots, and eco-driving. In the UK there is an annual Fleet Safety Conference and Awards, where fleet managers come together to celebrate best practice fleet safety management. There is also a fundraising gala dinner for Brake, at which the sense of community spirit and commitment to the cause is as strong as the commitment to fleet safety.

Companies are also encouraged to get involved in community activities, getting fleet drivers to climb a mountain could be an important aspect of a fleet safety program. Climbing a mountain is a terrific team builder that gives employees a sense of achievement. Doing it for a cause means it has extra significance. Doing it for a cause such as Brake, a charity supporting road crash victims and campaigning for road safety helps embed the importance of road safety in employees' consciences and give them ownership of it, rather than road safety being something that they are told to do by government and the boss.

Brake runs an annual Road Safety Week that epitomises the spirit of road safety. It is an ideal opportunity for companies to kick-start community engagement, whether within the community of their own employees, or wider definitions of community. Again, having such an event helps reinforce in employees' minds that road safety is not someone else's concern. It's a community, charitable concern that belongs to everyone.

Companies create their own activities for Road Safety Week, ranging from taking trucks to schools to demonstrate blind spots to children, or having dress up days in the office in aid of Brake. Companies as small as one-person learner driving schools through to Coca-Cola and major supermarket chains take part.

4. Results

4.1. Fleet Safety Forum

The Fleet Safety Forum has over 1,000 members worldwide and continues to grow. Examples of the results companies have seen by addressing their road risk, and their comments about working with Brake, are available through the Fleet Safety Forum website.

4.2. Arval

Leading vehicle fleet and fuel management company Arval embarked on improving its road safety culture in 2004 following a risk assessment exercise. This focus coincided with the appointment of a full time fleet manager with responsibility for road safety. Tracey Scarr identifies the start of her personal road safety journey as the day she came into contact with Brake, including its Pledge, in November 2005.

Tracey was inspired to present the Pledge to drivers within Arval, whether they drove for work or not. She highlights the day her campaign stepped up a level when Arval's chief executive, Jean-Marc Torre, attended one of her sessions. With her passionate delivery of the topic, using a PowerPoint resource provided by Brake, she embedded support for the cause at the most senior level within the organisation, which was to be crucial to Arval's future success.

With this senior management support, Tracey has been able to lead an on-going programme of road safety awareness training, as well as many other measures to ensure improved risk management and ultimately the safety of Arval employees, customers and the communities within which they operate. Tracey developed Arval's own road safety course, and during 2006 rolled it out to all company car drivers with attendance being mandatory. The course included interactive discussions around the issues of attitude, beliefs and behaviour when on the road. For many Arval drivers, it was the first time they had really thought about their driving since they passed their test.

Emotionally, the courses challenged them because they were hard-hitting. But for the first time, many Arval employees realised that driving was a life skill and that the issue which confronted them was not just about driving for work. The courses were followed up with a multi-media, safety focused, communications campaign providing employees with advice on safe driving and updates on legislation. For example:

- The company has used individual Pledge topics as headline messages on its intranet site, changing the messages on a rolling monthly basis to help keep them front of mind.
- The Pledges are embedded into Arval's Company Driver Handbook.
- All Pledge posters are featured on the company's Drive4Life noticeboard in its staff entrance.
- The company runs its own Road Safety Week events. To coincide with Road Safety Week in 2007, Arval highlighted the potentially fatal results of common errors behind the wheel, with a dramatic re-enactment of a road traffic crash. The event promoted

the importance of road safety to the entire workforce and 2,000 customers who received a DVD of the mock crash. It was, and still is, made available to all through the Arval website, as well as being posted on You Tube.

Arval distributes road safety information to customers on a regular basis, including case studies and industry safety related updates. Recent mailings have included topics such as mobile phone use, duty of care and changes in legislation, all of which have used information provided by the Pledge campaign and Brake's Fleet Safety Forum.

Over three sessions in 2008 the company invited 90 of its customers' managers to the Arval head office to attend Brake Pledge workshops. This programme continues to run, with Tracey having so engaged with Brake's scheme that she now delivers the training courses to other fleet managers on the charity's behalf on a voluntary basis, as well as on Arval's behalf to its own customers' managers.

The company has reduced its crash and insurance costs and won two major awards for its work.

4.3. Royal Mail

This year's fleet innovation award at the Brake fleet safety awards went to the UK's Royal Mail. Its crash rate per vehicle has reduced by 24% over two years despite a growth in fleet size of 14% to 35,000 vehicles. One of its methods for increasing internal commitment to road safety is to spread the message wider; it incorporates into its programs sharing its best practice methodologies with other fleet operators.

4.4. Road Safety Week

Employers report that they find Road Safety Week a useful tool, because employees perceive Road Safety Week as a credible event because it is backed by an NGO, is featured in the media, and involves many people at all levels of society and is not just a company initiative invented by their boss. It is good to feel part of something bigger and reputable.

In Road Safety Week UK 2011, 758 companies were known to take part. Road Safety Week was also organised in New Zealand in 2012, with a small number of companies taking part alongside schools, colleges and communities.

5. Conclusions

The benefits of addressing road risk and reducing collision rates are wide-ranging from the well-documented cost benefits to environmental benefits and most importantly preventing potential road deaths and injuries, but by engaging with a road safety NGO companies are adding an extra dimension to their fleet safety work.

Road safety should be at the heart of companies' Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, and by doing this, corporations can achieve wider buy in from the shop floor up to Board level, as well as engaging employees' families and the wider community in a key issue that affects everyone from children to the elderly, and where companies can be shining lights in achieving change.

Further information

Brake: www.brake.org

Fleet Safety Forum: www.fleetsafetyforum.org

Road Safety Week: www.roadsafetyweek.org

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