

Title: *QFleet Client Access System: Fleet risk management via the internet*

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Abstract

QFleet is the largest vehicle lessor in Queensland, with almost 13,000 vehicles under management for around 1,200 government and government-funded organisations.

QFleet has developed a process for the collection, analysis and presentation of fleet specific motor vehicle accident statistics using the power and dynamics of the information medium of the future – the internet.

Using the QFleet Client Access System (CAS) via the internet, clients can review real-time information about where, when, and how accidents have occurred in their fleet – and compare the performance of their vehicles against other QFleet clients. Clients can lodge their own insurance claims directly into the system, while risk analysis information and financial details are added by QFleet and its insurer.

Based on the information available in CAS, clients can make informed decisions about the management of risk for their drivers. QFleet offers its clients a range of accident and safety management strategies including driver training, financial incentives, and regular informational newsletters. Hence, the performance of QFleet vehicles, in terms of accident damage, has been consistently better in key areas than most other large commercial fleets.

QFleet's holistic approach to safety begins with the provision of contemporary, accessible information and risk treatment and financing options to help its clients protect their drivers and the community.

QFleet's approach to road safety

With nearly 13,000 vehicles under management from 1,200 government and government-funded organisations, QFleet is the largest vehicle lessor in Queensland. As a commercial business unit of the Queensland Services Group, Department of Public Works, QFleet's market is limited to government and government-funded organisations. QFleet's services include:

- leasing (including financing),
- fleet management,
- vehicle servicing, maintenance, and repairs,
- short term vehicle hire,
- asset leasing and management,
- strategic advisory services,
- and accident management.

Being Queensland's largest vehicle lessor and part of government carries certain responsibilities, such as ensuring that its vehicles are maintained and driven in a manner that enhances the safety of both metropolitan and regional communities. Ahern (1) suggests that some of the keys to modern safety management include a demonstrated commitment from management that safety has equal priority to other organisational goals, employee involvement in, and ownership of, the safety process, and training employees in safety skills. QFleet has developed a comprehensive road safety program that is aimed at reducing the number and severity of injuries resulting from the operation of QFleet vehicles. In recognition of the high standard of this program, QFleet was recently awarded the inaugural 2000 Road Safety Award for Industry by the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ) and the Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety Queensland (CARRS-Q).

Over the last few years, QFleet has implemented several major road safety initiatives based on a total approach to safety, encompassing current research and experience, government employees, their workplace, and the community. According to Martinez (2), injuries can be avoided by following “the four E’s of prevention”: education, enforcement, engineering, and economic incentives. Enforcement and engineering relate to the policing of road rules and the design of hazard free roads. However, the most significant portion of QFleet’s road safety program is based on elements that QFleet can influence directly, such as client education and economic incentives.

According to Martinez (2), “education increases knowledge and awareness. It provides information to enable people to make the correct choices. Education includes public information as well as training, and it can help establish social norms for support for enforcement, regulation, or design changes. Education and increased awareness are often necessary before there is a perceived need for change.” QFleet encourages clients to educate their organisations about safe driving by offering a reduced rate on driver training programs that are designed to change the way drivers think about their safety, in addition to teaching vehicle control skills. QFleet also facilitates ongoing communication with clients through its monthly newsletter, the *QFleet Flyer*. Through this medium, QFleet educates drivers about road safety by printing articles on new products, service and maintenance, plus a regular feature column, *Road Safety Review*.

Part of QFleet’s commitment to road safety includes the sponsorship of various activities, namely the Bicycle Safety Program, an Education Queensland activity that teaches primary school children about bicycle safety, and the Road Safety Education Program for adolescents. In addition, QFleet sponsors the Road Awareness and Accident Prevention (RAAP) Program for Young Drivers, which is delivered by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, and targets young people who are, or soon will be, holders of drivers’ licenses. QFleet continues to sponsor these programs as they deliver worthwhile benefits to the community by encouraging young Queenslanders to adopt responsible road safety habits.

Kunreuther (3) believes that organisations should provide incentives for improving driving behaviour. In 1995, QFleet introduced Customer Performance Pricing (CPP) to encourage clients to improve their safety records. Every year through the CPP process, QFleet adjusts the insurance premiums of every client to reflect the accident claims’ histories of all vehicles in their fleet. As a result, clients with a good driving history pay lower premiums than those who have made many claims throughout the year. Ultimately, CPP rewards clients with safe driving habits and encourages them to make sure drivers of their vehicles maintain high driving standards at all times.

Translating theory and experience into meaningful programs and measuring their impact is the challenge for today’s fleet manager. Traditionally, the time taken to research and review the success of road safety programs has been an impediment to practical and responsive improvement and refocussing of content and approach. It has particularly impacted on timeliness and responsiveness.

The need for access to real-time data and the capability to rapidly analyse trends and performance leads to the final and most comprehensive element of QFleet’s road safety program - the Client Access System (CAS). This provides clients with information from the QFleet database through a direct internet link from the QFleet website. QFleet recognised the need for a system like CAS when the sheer size of its fleet meant that the organisation had the distinct capabilities to develop a system that could move with changing world trends and further improve customer service levels. A more effective method of communication was warranted in order to facilitate enduring client relationships. CAS was also designed to eliminate duplication of data across QFleet’s client base. In order to further its responsibility for good corporate citizenship, QFleet’s methods include educating drivers about road safety and developing road safety programs as reflected by Ferdinand’s belief (4). He argues that “road safety has a core value of saving lives and reducing trauma of the people we love and live with. We have an opportunity to make a real contribution to the development of our society.” Hence, a process for the collection, analysis, and presentation of QFleet data using the power and convenience of the internet evolved.

The QFleet Client Access System

Background

Research revealed that QFleet's clients wanted an online data system where they could access information quickly and easily, and monitor their own fleets. Previously, clients would contact QFleet's Fleet Consultants and request hard or digital copies of various documents needed for their management and financial reporting. This method was time consuming for both parties and was not cost effective. QFleet investigated various possibilities and CAS was established. Clients were involved with the testing and implementation of CAS, giving them the opportunity to contribute to the content and format. Through the development of this innovative system, QFleet has since set high industry standards and received the award for innovation at the 1998 Department of Public Works Recognition of Excellence Awards. Consequently, QFleet has produced an Australian Fleet Management market first by providing this sophisticated and internet-based client server system.

Use

All clients have access to CAS, with major clients including the Departments of Primary Industries, Health, and Families using it most frequently and to its full capabilities. QFleet's analysis shows that during the past year, the number of users has more than tripled with CAS now handling around 3,000 transactions each week. Access to client specific data is authorised to over 250 sites around the state. With multiple access available to each site, there are many QFleet clients taking advantage of this real-time access to fleet risk management information.

Since its inception four years ago, CAS has become a replacement tool for client fleet management systems. Clients are no longer required to keep such comprehensive vehicle files and CAS enables them to keep a better check on their insurance claims. CAS also gives clients the opportunity to identify current issues that may impact on safety, such as those vehicles overdue for servicing or due for replacement, as well as operational requirements, such as expected delivery dates for new vehicles, fuel histories, and other general information about QFleet. Because CAS can be accessed via the internet, all claims graphs and client specific information are security protected by password logins and firewall protocols. The information available on CAS is constantly reviewed to meet clients' needs and feedback from clients is taken into consideration.

Fleet Management Reports

CAS is very advantageous to the smooth running of QFleet's operations as it provides QFleet's staff and clients with a range of information regarding clients' fleets. Clients can conveniently access the information contained in CAS and then transfer it to spreadsheets enabling them to manipulate the data for reporting purposes. Examples of some of the fleet reports available include:

- Usage – monitors the actual usage of the vehicles in terms of mileage and time period of the lease. The objective of this report is to allow the client to identify those vehicles that are under or over utilised.
- Provisional Lease – allows the clients to view the provisional agreements that QFleet have offered.
- On Order/Active – vehicles that clients have on order, and those vehicles currently on lease.
- Service Reports – allows clients to view vehicles that are due for servicing up to one month in advance.
- Reorder Due – advises clients to reorder so that they receive the next vehicle at the time the contract expires.
- Returned – a list of returned vehicles. Information can still be accessed even after vehicles are no longer 'active'.
- Full Details of the Vehicle – a comprehensive breakdown of the vehicle and its contract.
- Invoice Lines – a record of every invoice that QFleet has sent the client on that particular vehicle.
- Fleet Summary – a global view of the status of the client's fleet. Within this section, 'drill downs' are available for specific fields.
- Fines – traffic violations including parking, speeding, and red light camera fines.
- Claims, Claims Tracking, and Claims Graphs – follows the client's claims history and industry benchmarking. QFleet translates the claims information into manageable data, which is then presented in easy-to-read graph format.

Client Assistance

QFleet Fleet Consultants assist new clients in gaining access to CAS and explain its uses and benefits. However, any client experiencing difficulties using or accessing CAS prior to or after this session can contact the CAS Help Desk. QFleet staff and clients find CAS user-friendly as it has pull-down menu screens as well as help screens located behind every title that give further explanation of its function. Underlined data, such as the heading or the financial years, indicates information stored behind these labels. The heading links to a detailed help file that explains the various components of the graph and the risk management sections of CAS. These include insurance, claim forms, driver training, and specialist staff, such as QFleet's in-house insurance adviser. One of the benefits available to clients is that emails can be sent to key members of QFleet staff via CAS.

CAS and Claims Management

The online and real-time access of CAS is particularly advantageous, especially for many of QFleet's rural and remote clients, as almost half of QFleet's vehicles operate in Far North Queensland. CAS has become a valuable claims management resource for QFleet and its clients. Clients can lodge a Motor Vehicle Accident Report and Claim Form electronically, while QFleet and its insurer analyse risk information and add financial details. Clients can also analyse current information such as where, when, how, and why accidents have occurred within their fleet and compare their performances against overall benchmarks and other QFleet clients.

Accessibility to Information

The Fleet Safety Manual, published jointly by the National Safety Council of Australia (NSCA) and Federal Office of Road Safety (FORS) in 1995, provides information about the way accidents can be analysed and reported. It stresses that results should be widely available. One of CAS' key strengths is that it can be accessed almost anywhere at any time. The Manual also refers to the process of benchmarking. CAS makes a simple comparison that allows clients to do performance testing of their organisation against overall outcomes for the fleet. Detailed analysis and benchmarking can be undertaken for any client as a special case. Such projects would consider other pertinent issues such as kilometres travelled, time travelled, commuter use, type of vehicle, where driving occurs, special exposures, etc. In addition, Anderson and Plowman (5) believe "maintaining an efficient system of recording and monitoring overall fleet, individual driver and individual vehicle crash involvement allows organisations to establish a database of information which can be used to learn from past incidents to determine patterns that can be investigated and improved." QFleet's CAS is an example of such a database. They also believe that systems like CAS are beneficial as they develop incident reporting instructions (i.e. crash report forms and glovebox crash kits in vehicles), investigate serious incidents, make recommendations for remedial measures, record and analyse relevant data at regular intervals, and collect benchmarking data, such as average accident cost and number of claims.

Graphical Representation of Information

CAS was developed to verify data and complement loss material with information about vehicles such as location, make, model, age, value, accessories, etc. Part of this process involves monthly reviews, conversion, and testing of data. This quality control check provides confidence in data content and continuity. QFleet clients have indicated that graphs represent the best means of clearly summarising and analysing claims data. CAS can produce graphs that show correlations of cause codes and accident types, expressing both in terms of number of claims, severity, and the relative cost of each category. Graphs also allow quick assimilation and are ideal tools for management given the many demands and constraints on their time. These graphs do not attempt to give all the answers, but should only be used as a guide for further indepth analysis. By providing simple, easily accessed performance indicators in easily understood graphic format, fleet managers should be alerted to any issues worth investigating. Using the available 'drill down' facility allows access to the base data ie the individual claims information, which shows all collected information about clients' accidents. Clients can view graphs that compare claims by region throughout Queensland. Each QFleet client is given a code that enables access to information restricted to that client and their fleet. The only time a client is able to access data that is not their own is when they access the claims section of CAS and can look at QFleet data as a whole and compare it to their own organisation. Using this information, the client can determine whether their levels of accident insurance claims are above or below other QFleet's claims.

Accident Reports and Statistics

QFleet works closely with its insurance broker to incorporate accident statistics into CAS for access by QFleet and its clients. This is based on the Motor Vehicle Accident Report and Claim Forms filled in by clients after accidents. These forms are available electronically via CAS or in hard copy in every vehicle glovebox compartment. For minor incidents, these forms are retained at a local level.

Otherwise, a central process ensures continuity of material, timeliness, etc. Information is entered into an external mainframe and then electronically transferred to a database maintained for QFleet at its head office. This guarantees that QFleet and its clients can have access to the very latest information, and immediate data analysis can be completed at any time.

QFleet stores information about drivers involved in accidents, such as their license type, age, attendance at driver training, and other driving experience. Other information includes damage to the vehicle, location of the accident by postcode, time of accident, road surface, severity, accident cause, type and apparent fault, and financial information regarding repair costs and recoveries. This provides basic but useful information that should encourage a more in-depth analysis of incidents.

Fleet Performance

As a result of in-depth analysis, the performance of QFleet vehicles, in terms of accident damage, has been consistently better in key areas compared with most other large commercial fleets. QFleet's holistic approach to safety begins with the provision of contemporary, accessible information, risk treatment, and financing options to help its clients protect their drivers and the community. Based on the information supplied in CAS, QFleet clients can make informed decisions about the management of risk for their drivers.

Once a month, the file of financial data is uploaded. CAS automatically calculates the average cost of each claim, the average cost of accidental damage per vehicle, and the strike rate or number of vehicles per 100 that have had a claim. QFleet then runs the graphs' module in CAS and compares the outcomes with previous months, e.g.:

- Increase or decrease in claims' costs,
- Increase or decrease in number of claims,
- current performance measured with past years,
- type of claims (e.g. storm, tail enders, or parking),
- any trends,
- major changes,
- and location of accidents.

Importantly, if any trends are evident, they can then be examined in greater detail. For example, QFleet will advise clients of any issues that need investigating by including an article in the *QFleet Flyer* or arranging driver training. Independent driver training experts may be contacted to establish the feasibility of holding training sessions, and determine whether appropriate courses are available to meet the needs (e.g. location, experience in particular areas etc.) of QFleet and their clients,

QFleet continues to monitor the performance of its fleet, both internally and by reference to market trends. Providing QFleet clients, and therefore drivers, with pertinent information about their performance is one step further in reinforcing positive behaviour or highlighting areas where improvement could be expected. The data in CAS also helps QFleet evaluate whether its safety programs are meeting client needs.

Conclusion

Being Queensland's largest vehicle lessor brings certain responsibilities, such as ensuring that its vehicles are maintained and driven in a manner that enhances road safety. QFleet has recognised and responded to this through the development of a comprehensive road safety program that is aimed at reducing the number and severity of injuries resulting from the operation of QFleet vehicles.

Part of that road safety program involved the development of an online data system that could be accessed by QFleet, its clients, insurance broker, and insurer. Because CAS can be accessed via the internet, this allows clients from regional and metropolitan areas to view the same information. CAS

has significantly reduced the duplication of data, and enables all involved to look at the same information, and manipulate it to suit their needs. CAS can generate reports indicating various risks to QFleet and its clients. This provides the means for performance monitoring and trend analysis for further research and safety program development. This important continual feedback loop supports ongoing improvement and refinement of safety programs.

Based on the information that CAS holds and provides, QFleet and its clients can make informed decisions about the management of risk for their drivers. QFleet strives to provide a safe environment for its drivers and the community by offering clients a range of accident and safety management strategies including driver training, financial incentives, and regular informational newsletters. Notably, because of its efforts, the performance of QFleet's vehicles, in terms of accident damage, have been benchmarked as consistently better in key areas than most other large commercial fleets. QFleet has been recognised for its achievements after being awarded the Road Safety Award from RACQ and CARRS-Q and Recognition of Excellence from the Department of Public Works. QFleet proved its commitment to road safety through the development of the innovative Client Access System.

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