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Facing the ELD Mandate Head-On:

What to Look for in a Compliant Solution

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Complying with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's electronic logging device (ELD) mandate doesn't have to be difficult, painful, and expensive. Organizations that look at the new requirements solely as a burden are missing the opportunities that new technologies can provide.

Fleet managers seeking to deploy a system that meets the bare minimum requirements of the new regulation will find options that can meet those minimal needs. But there is another, more forwardthinking approach to dealing with this mandate.

Instead of seeing compliance as a burden, fleet managers could choose to view it as an opportunity. The ELD mandate could be seen as a chance to upgrade a key technology component of their operation, and to begin building a robust technology infrastructure that will grow as their company grows.

Whichever path fleet managers choose to take on their road to compliance with the ELD mandate, as they evaluate their options they should be looking for a compliance solution that is:

- 1 Easy for drivers to use
- 2 Built on an integrated platform
- 3 Flexible and easily expandable
- 4 Developed by a credible and reliable solutions provider

The most effective approach to compliance with the ELD mandate is to partner with a solutions provider that can deliver on these four essential qualities.

The Solution Must Be Easy for Drivers to Use

Any solution to the ELD mandate must be easy for the drivers to use, because they're the ones who will have the most interaction with it.

Practically speaking, fleet managers can expect a certain amount of pushback when attempting to deploy any new technology, process, or workflow. One of the best ways to reduce the amount of pushback from drivers is to reduce the amount of change by giving them a solution that is easy for them to understand and use.

For example, drivers will find it far easier to log their hours electronically using the smartphones that they already own. The drivers' familiarity with their smartphones will make the transition to a new ELD solution much easier.

Other practical concerns include the cost of the solution and how much training will be necessary for effective implementation. By selecting a solution that's intuitive and works on the smartphones that drivers already own, managers will face a lower cost of

deployment. That's because there is less equipment to purchase and training will be less costly and time consuming.

A Flexible, Fully Integrated Solution Is Better Than a Stand-Alone App

There are stand-alone mobile apps on the market that provide fleet managers with a free or cheap solution for complying with the ELD mandate. The problem with those apps is that they require drivers to manually enter data. Stand-alone apps do nothing but substitute paper forms for electronic forms and turn drivers into data entry clerks. For any manager concerned with driver pushback, stand-alone apps can be a nightmare that will significantly hamper their compliance efforts.

It's not a true solution if it isn't easy to use. If the mobile app doesn't automatically receive data from a device that plugs into the OBDII port of the vehicle, it fails the ease-of-use test and provides few additional benefits.

Ideally, the solution should be capable of fully integrating with other technology components that help the entire organization operate at a higher level of efficiency. While complying with the ELD mandate is the main concern, the solution should also be capable of integrating with technology components that include:

- Driver Safety Monitoring and Reporting—Receive monitoring reports that provide all of the information necessary to create and maintain a driver safety program.
- Efficient Dispatching—Easily communicate critical job information to drivers and field workers through their smartphone.
- Route Planning and Optimization—Automatically determine the most efficient route and stop order along with estimated times of arrival.
- Fleet Tracking—Monitor and report the real-time location of every vehicle in the fleet.
- Mobile Time Clock—Allow drivers to clock in and out while also providing the data necessary for payroll and compliance reports.
- Vehicle Diagnostics and Maintenance—Access real-time reports about the mechanical fitness of each vehicle, receive email alerts for needed service, and review service checklists and reports for the entire fleet.

By integrating this full range of features with an ELD solution, fleet managers can streamline or automate many day-today administrative tasks while promoting compliance, safety, and efficiency. This ability to start saving time and money immediately makes a fully integrated solution much more beneficial than a barebones ELD.

The solution must also be flexible enough to adapt to future changes in government regulations, industry standards, or company operations. Organizations should be able to work with their provider to add functionality as necessary.

Partner With a Credible and Reliable Solutions Provider

It is crucial that fleet managers ensure they are partnering with a credible and reliable solutions provider. Anyone can design an ELD app and upload it to an app store for sale. Likewise, companies that already provide fleet technology services can develop a solution that targets managers who want to get by with the bare minimum.

What managers need is a provider that understands the “bigger picture” and is aware of the challenges of operating a complex mobile work environment. The provider must also demonstrate proven experience with developing mobility solutions that not only ensure compliance but also help the entire organization operate more efficiently.

With a partner like this, managers can get the installation, training, and support they need to implement an ELD solution that will not only ensure compliance, but also promote efficiency and productivity. It is important for fleet managers to feel confident that they have a technology partner they can turn to for advice and assistance if regulations change or new features become available.

Face the ELD Mandate Head-On

By taking a holistic approach to complying with the ELD mandate, fleet managers can select a solution that is actually an investment in the future of their company. Even fleet managers who want to deploy a bare minimum solution can do so while also establishing a foundation upon which they can develop a fully integrated mobile resource management solution. The first step on the path towards compliance is selecting the right solution. It should be easy to use, built on an integrated platform, flexible and easily expandable, and developed by a credible solutions provider.