

# FEE

# Fleet Equipment

BabcoX

July 2018

*Managing Equipment Assets*

**Where to start  
with trailer telematics**

**Why you should start an  
oil analysis program right now**

**BUSTING REMAN MYTHS:  
BREATH NEW LIFE INTO EXISTING EQUIPMENT**

# ***More than a truck***

**DTNA Pres., CEO Roger Nielsen  
unveils its electric vehicle strategy**

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## On the Cover

DTNA's Roger Nielsen (left)  
and Martin Daum with the  
all-electric Freightliner  
eCascadia

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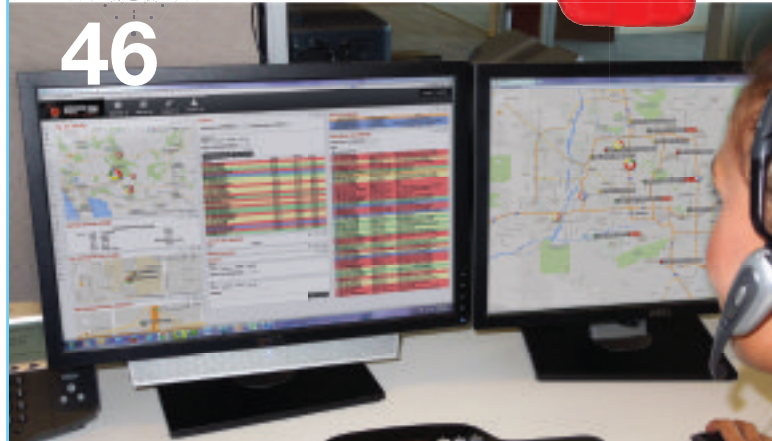
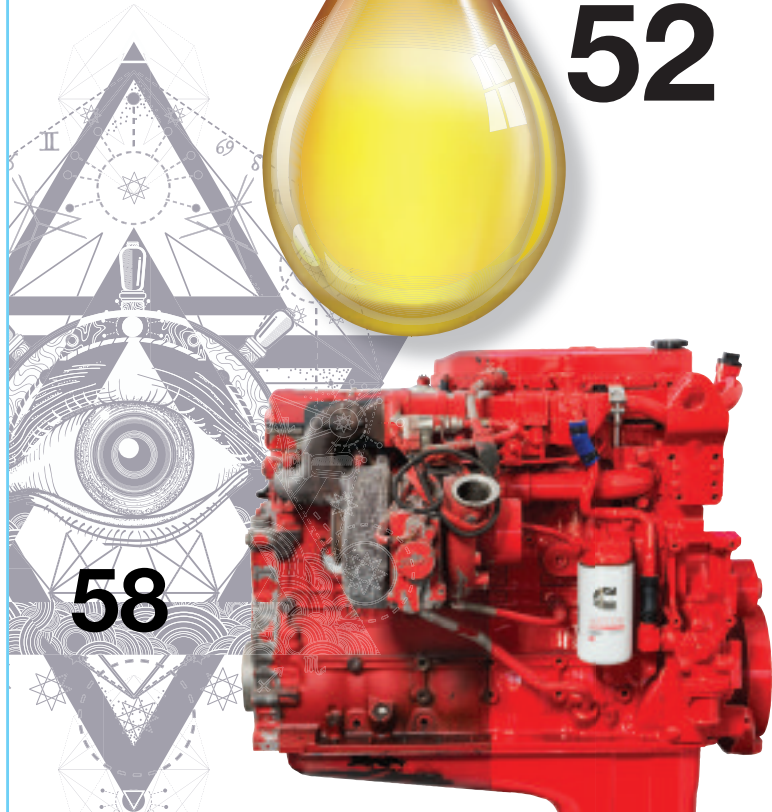
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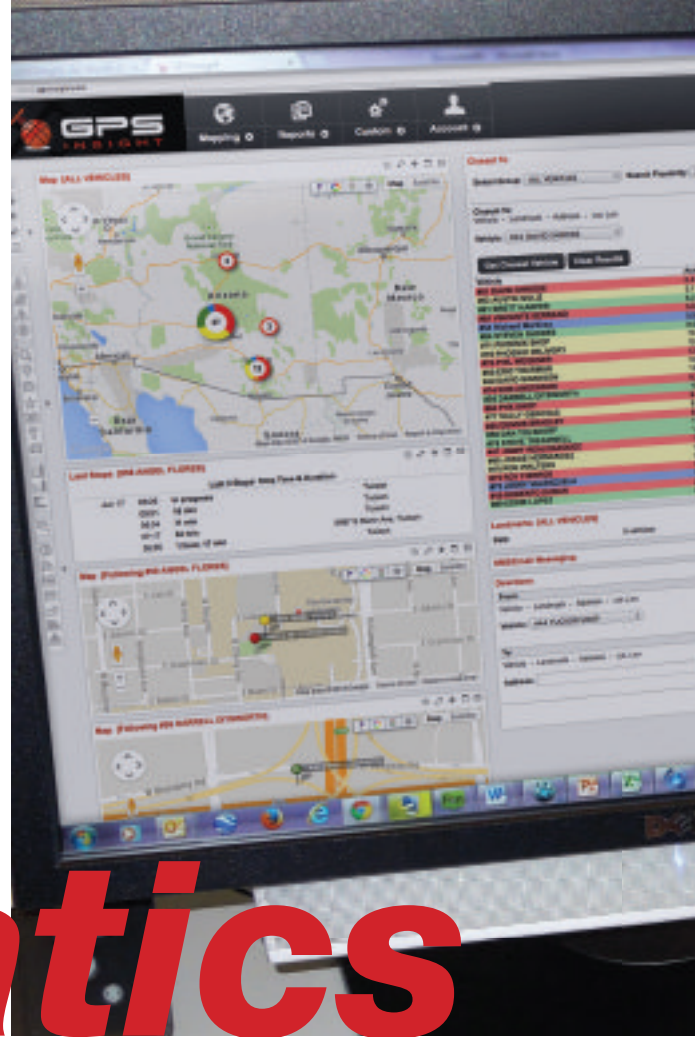
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# Where to start with trailer telematics

Given how ingrained data is in today's tractors, chances are good that you have wrapped your arms around today's telematics offerings to improve your equipment operations. Well, do I have good news for you: that same depth of data and application insight is coming to trailers! I can see your one-thousand-yard stare as you contemplate massive amount of data points and how to put them to work. The even better news is that since you've dipped your toe in the water with your tractors, you've got a head start on how to get to work with trailer telematics. *Fleet Equipment* is here to help you along your way as you hit the next mile marker on the road to improved asset efficiency.

Let's get started.

## 1 What are your trailer management challenges?

This is the first question you need to answer. Trailer telematics providers know that every customer's challenges are different, so be clear and direct about what you want to do with trailer data with your potential solution providers. This can range from the basic, "I want to know where my trailers are and what they're doing," to the more complex, "I need to organize my trailer maintenance schedule to reduce overall trailer downtime." Nothing is off the table.

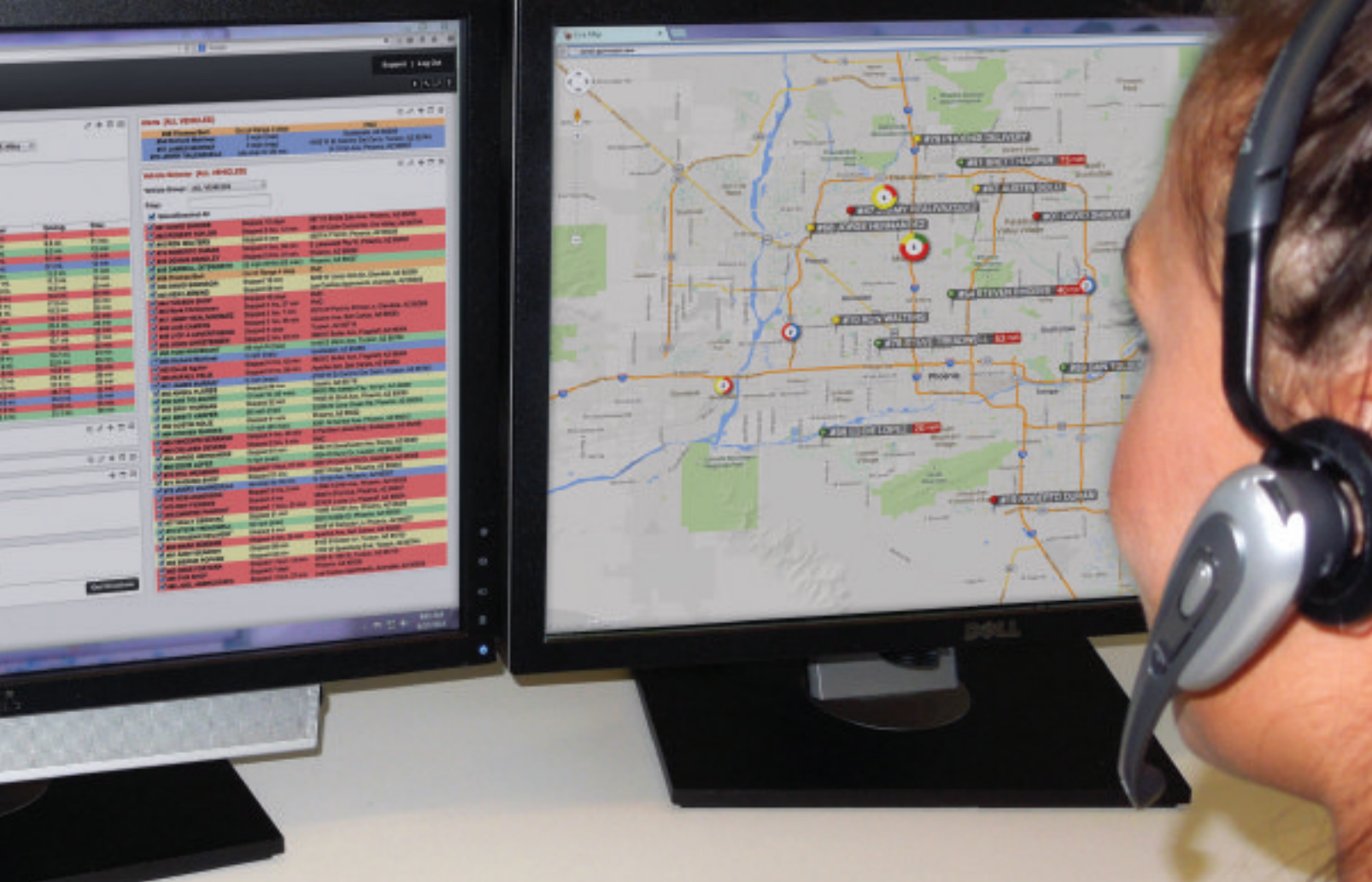
"Fleet managers may have a difficult time figuring out trailer status—has it dropped off or picked up a load?

How many stops has it made on a given day? How many hours has the trailer been used in a given week? A month? A year?" Ryan Driscoll, marketing director for GPS Insight, mused about potential trailer management problems. "Many businesses with trailers have inefficient maintenance processes, which leads to unexpected trailer downtime—are there any maintenance issues that need to be addressed? Telematics can answer all of those questions at a touch of a button and according to the precise needs of the fleet."

No problem is unsolvable (though I can't promise that you'll always like the answer). Rather than focusing on what a trailer telematics solution can do, focus on what you need it to do. That means being honest with yourself and your potential supplier. If you're having problems with trailer theft, for example, then you need to be able to talk about that, at least generally, to tailor a telematics solution. Bottom line: The more specific you are about what you need, the faster you could see the ROI results.

"Using this technology will help them right size the trailer fleet and ensure they are maximizing usage," Driscoll said. "The ROI is often initially seen in utilization and theft recovery. This ROI can be as quick as the first month. We've heard stories where trailers were stolen within the same week of being installed with telematics and, thanks to GPS tracking, were recovered the same day."

(More on charting and realizing ROI in a minute.)



## 2 Start shopping around

Armed with your trailer management challenges, large and small, immediate “must-haves” and a few “would-be-nices,” it’s time to have some fun. Pick up the phone, open up a Google tab, or thumb through the pages of a fine business-to-business trade journal like *Fleet Equipment* to start researching telematics providers that produce potential solutions to your problems. (You can find a treasure trove of telematics information here: [fleetequipmentmag.com/tag/telematics-technology](http://fleetequipmentmag.com/tag/telematics-technology)).

When choosing a telematics partner, there are a number of things you should look for, according to Al Anderson, director of heavy-duty sales for Peterson Manufacturing, which recently announced its foray into trailer telematics with the launch of its PetersonPulse intelligent trailer system:

## Potential problems

Here’s a quick list of potential trailer management problems that our cast of industry sources pointed to as common solutions they create for their fleet customers. Know that whatever you’re dealing with, you’re likely not alone:

- Missing or misplaced trailers.
- Trailer and cargo theft concerns.
- Trailers are spending too much time at customer sites or sitting unused in your yard.
- Driver time is wasted while drivers wait for trailers in yards, ports, or other sites.
- Unorganized maintenance scheduling is causing unscheduled trailer downtime.
- Use of cargo space is inefficient.
- Lack of visibility into current trailer conditions.

1. Look for a supplier that has technology that can be deployed on any trailer OEM platform they are purchasing or may purchase. “This is important because the fleet doesn’t want multiple technologies to communicate with on trailers from different manufacturers,” Anderson said.

2. Look for a supplier that is using readily available, accepted and proven communication technology. “For instance, attempting to communicate over a protocol

that isn't accepted and proven can complicate troubleshooting," Anderson said. "Additionally, ensuring the solution uses accepted protocols helps third-party suppliers that provide additional functionality adapt to the existing smart trailer network more readily."

3. Look for a supplier that has strong business relationships with the manufacturers of the components or technology that a fleet wishes to monitor on its trailers. "A fleet choosing to deploy smart trailer technology and not being able to fully capitalize on its capabilities isn't getting full value for the investment," he noted.

4. Finally, ensure that a supplier's technology won't cause the trailer to go out of service if the system or a component of the system fails. "The smart trailer system should also use readily available components in the case of an individual component failure," Anderson recommended.

Keep in mind that, just like the evolution of your tractor telematics usage, once you get a taste of trailer telematics power, you'll likely want more. Even if you think you're looking for a lightweight trailer tracking solution, you might want to consider something that can expand to offer more robust services.

"Fleets should look for true trailer management solutions, not just simple trailer track and trace," said Roni Taylor, vice president of business development and strategy with Spireon. "True trailer management solutions are built to serve the needs of busy trailer fleets. It's imperative that your



## Software selection and the ELD hangover

Your head pounds. You can't focus. The world swirls around you, and all you want is a heaping plate of comfort food. Symptoms of the ELD hangover—a technology implantation process that has plagued unprepared fleets that are still having issues due to poor ELD device training and misguided ELD selection. The industry has already seen at least one no-name ELD provider exit the market (One20, anyone?), and what happens tomorrow is anyone's guess. Partnering with a trailer telematics provider is not something that should be entered lightly.

"Certain fleets are feeling pain after a number of ELD providers have exited the business due to increased competition that squeezed hardware margins," said Mike Molitor, Great Dane Trailers' director of business development. "The trailer telematics space will likely see a similar dynamic over the next three to five years, so it is important to select a trusted and reliable partner that will support the fleet over the full 10-plus-year lifecycle of a trailer."

trailer management solution does everything it can to maximize return on investment and minimize total cost of ownership. That means actionable insights into trailer utilization, pool management, detention reduction and billing, and more."

"The best trailer management solutions provide not only a robust user interface but also the ability to send data via API into popular TMS solutions like TMW and McLeod and even your own proprietary ERP or other solutions," Taylor said. "It shouldn't be a struggle to get the data you need, how you need it."

### 3 Integration and implementation

One word: Dashboard. Yeah, you likely have multiple dashboards. At least one for tractor telematics, maybe another for remote diagnostics, a third for service management, and, oh yeah, the ELD interface and DVIR records. If digital dashboards were tangible, you'd look like one of those overworked, over-acting characters in an infomercial buried under a bunch of clutter. To make life easier for you (and everyone around you), look for a telematics solution that can integrate into one of your existing platforms.

"Overwhelming your driver or back office with data may have a negative effect on how much attention is paid to the information being provided," Peterson's Anderson noted. "Choosing a technology provider that can integrate with current suppliers can also be tremendously helpful. That way, the people looking at the information being provided won't have to learn completely new systems to effectively manage the massive amount of available data."

If you need more cause to consolidate your dashboards, even the most diligent fleet managers can miss an important data point if they

are spread too thin.

"Managing multiple dashboards can cause even the most diligent fleet managers to overlook something crucial," said Andrew Liuzzo, marketing communications specialist for Truck-Lite, which offers the Road Ready trailer telematics solution. "When it comes to asset management, a comprehensive dashboard reduces the margin of error and can only promote efficiency."

### 4 Reaping the ROI

Once you have your solution of choice worked into your dashboard, it's best to start small. Pick a goal that's easy to complete in the short term to get your trailer telematics management legs under you.

"We would recommend to fleets that they prioritize the use case offerings most suited to their organization and define a realistic estimate of the overall value pool," said Mike Molitor, Great Dane Trailers' director of business development. "Begin pragmatic piloting on a limited number of use cases to drive improvement, versus trying to tackle it all at once."

The answer to the question of, "how does this improve my fleet?" will vary as wildly as the challenges that a fleet faces. To start, it's best to return to those problems you faced that sent you on this telematics journey. If you can say that the solution has helped you gain more visibility into your trailer management, reduced the number of trailer thefts or positively impacted your trailer maintenance process, then it's a win. Of course, you'll want more than the feeling of productivity to point to after the initial investment.

To do that, you can zoom out from the problem you started with to look at the larger value proposition picture telematics may have provided.

"ROI can be most quickly realized in hours of service and uptime, not to mention reduced CSA scores,"



## The value of trailer visibility

The value of having a bird's eye view and receiving real time notification of your trailer activities cannot be understated.

"When everyone in a fleet has access to the same information simultaneously, it can help eliminate guesswork and improve overall operational efficiency," said Lenworth Gordon, senior product manager for Verizon Connect. "Businesses can also stay ahead of maintenance and repairs, helping eliminate equipment breakdowns which can take assets out of commission, and hinder operational efficiencies. By staying ahead of maintenance, more accurate data is visible, helping enable a streamlined process that businesses can rely on. You also want to help ensure assets are visible within the same system. Try to avoid fragmentation with different incompatible systems."

Asset utilization can also be improved through identifying idle or detained trailers that might get overlooked. Out of sight, out of mind. With the right trailer telematics system, you can put those unused trailers front and center.

"Making sure your assets are allocated properly and efficiently can help optimize your fleet operations, helping create a strong foundation for overall operational excellence and can be especially important when your trailers have a high utilization rate," Gordon said. "It is also a great opportunity to increase revenue by utilizing existing assets."

Truck-Lite's Liuzzo said, checking off ROI bullet points. "Additionally, improved asset security against theft, reduced maintenance costs, decreased fuel consumption through proper tire pressure and overall fleet efficiency can help fleets to experience real cost savings."

"Doing more with less," Spireon's Taylor added, "reducing the number of trailers needed to effectively serve your customers, ensuring your trailers are where they need to be and when, recovering lost or stolen trailers, ensuring your customers' freight is secure through door and tamper sensors—these are among a few of the ways that ROI is realized."

Unsung telematics areas in which you can see savings, according to Peterson's Anderson, includes:

- Early warning of wheel-end issues, such as elevated wheel-end temperature, excessive bearing vibration, etc.
- Indication of an inoperative light, hopefully saving a CSA violation.
- Indication of an open door, non-

deployed trailer tail, etc.

- Interior trailer temperature.

"Fleet managers can monitor if their trailers are properly secured, protecting valuable cargo or equipment from thieves, and, in the case of reefer trailers, that the temperature is correct for the perishable items being transported," GPS Insight's Driscoll said. "Any change in status results in an alert, giving the driver and fleet personnel the opportunity to correct the change in status and make adjustments or alert authorities—in the case of a theft—immediately."

Ask yourself: What's the ROI of being able to deal with a problem now as opposed to a day, a week or even a month after it happens? It could be the difference between having to acquire a new trailer (good luck in today's trailer market) or getting one out onto the road that wouldn't have even known was in the yard if it weren't for your trailer tracking telematics solution. ▮