

DRIVERS' NEEDS TODAY

Giving staff the right technology in their commercial vehicle or company car can boost their productivity during the working day, while helping them feel valued as an employee. The right technologies incorporated within their vehicles can therefore support staff retention and attraction strategies – a key focus for many businesses.

TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT DRIVER NEEDS

In our recent survey, company car and private car drivers were asked to rate the importance of different technologies when choosing their vehicle. Unsurprisingly, it was those technologies that support the employee's working role – such as Bluetooth to allow for mobile phone calls and Sat Nav to find meeting or delivery addresses – that were most important to company car drivers. These were also the most popular technologies for private car users, although the level of importance was slightly lower.

IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR COMPANY CAR DRIVERS WHEN CHOOSING A VEHICLE

MARKS OUT OF 10

AIR CONDITIONING	BLUETOOTH	SAT NAV
8.1	7.7	7.4
DIGITAL RADIO	PARKING SENSORS	TEXT MESSAGING
7.1	7.0	4.3

IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR PRIVATE CAR DRIVERS WHEN CHOOSING A VEHICLE

MARKS OUT OF 10

AIR CONDITIONING	DIGITAL RADIO	PARKING SENSORS
7.1	6.4	6.0
SAT NAV	BLUETOOTH	TEXT MESSAGING
6.0	5.7	4.1

As well as being asked about technologies that support their working role, company car drivers were also asked about important features they expected in their car.

IMPORTANT FEATURES FOR A CAR

CONNECTS TO MY MOBILE PHONE

72%

INNOVATIVE DESIGN

54%

INTERNET CONNECTIVITY

49%

AVAILABLE WITHIN MOBILITY SCHEMES

35%

AUTONOMOUS DRIVING OPTION

31%

CONNECTS TO MY FRIEND'S CAR

20%

INCORPORATING DRIVERS' NEEDS

The technologies revealed in our survey results above may make the company vehicle a more attractive model to drive, but individual employee requirements have to be balanced with the needs of the organisation itself or else cost can increase significantly.

DO DRIVERS SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING TECHNOLOGIES:

WARNING SYSTEMS
THAT SENSE WHEN DRIVERS ARE ASLEEP

84%

AUTOMATIC STEERING SYSTEMS
DESIGNED TO STOP CARS WANDERING OUT OF THEIR LANE

68%

DRIVERLESS CARS
THAT REQUIRE NO HUMAN INPUT

26%

AUTOMATIC BRAKING SYSTEMS
THAT TAKE-OVER IN AN IMMINENT ACCIDENT

71%

HEAD-UP DISPLAYS
TO REPLACE TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENTS

44%

ALL-ELECTRIC VEHICLES
WITH THE RANGE AND PERFORMANCE OF PETROL

70%

AUTOMATED SYSTEMS
THAT TAKEOVER ALL ASPECTS OF MOTORWAY DRIVING

41%

COMPANY CAR POLICIES

Keeping an up-to-date company car policy is key to overcoming the challenges raised by technology. This will need to explain what technologies can be included in a vehicle choice, while also highlighting the driver's responsibilities. This could include mobile phone usage or other technologies being used while driving.

A focus needs to be placed on providing drivers with the technologies that support their comfort, safety and a pleasurable driving experience, rather than ones that may be high-tech and innovative, but are rarely used or provide the organisation/driver with little to no benefit. Incorporating non-essential technologies can also add to the number of potential distractions to the driver.



54%

OF DRIVERS THINK MOBILE PHONES ARE DISTRACTING



25%

THINK VOICE ACTIVATED TECHNOLOGY IS DISTRACTING



22%

THINK SAT NAV IS DISTRACTING

SUPPORTING GREEN AMBITIONS

A growing ambition for many drivers is having access to a business vehicle or company car that demonstrates their environmental credentials. They will therefore want access to a fully electric or hybrid vehicle as part of their environmental lifestyle choices.

However, their needs must be balanced with practical considerations. If they are expecting to regularly drive long distances in these vehicles, then current vehicle choices may not always match their preference.

Employees wishing to use electric or electric-hybrid vehicles will also need to have fairly easy access to a charging point, which may preclude those who live in flats or have only road-side parking.

STAFF ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

Many drivers feel their car is a 'visual pay packet in the driveway' and a tool to emphasise and reflect their salary and career. That's why a company car scheme, and access to the right vehicles and technologies within it, remains an important tool for staff recruitment and retention. Future technologies and a shift in attitudes to vehicle ownership may impact the use of company car schemes in the future, though.

In our survey, nearly two-thirds of company car drivers say the vehicle was an important part of their decision to take the job, and almost half of all drivers see a company car as a mark of achievement.



61%

OF COMPANY CAR DRIVERS AGREE THAT THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO CHOOSE THE EXACT CAR THEY WISH



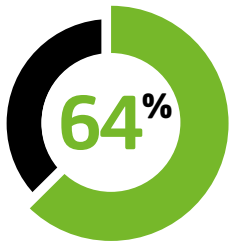
47%

SEE HAVING A COMPANY CAR AS A MARK OF ACHIEVEMENT



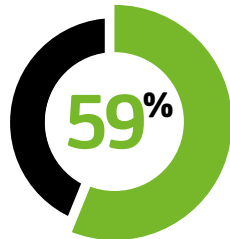
39%

SEE A CAR AS AN IMPORTANT EXPRESSION OF THEIR PERSONALITY

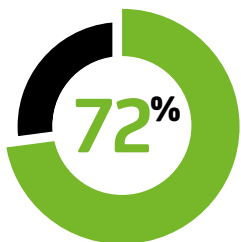


OF CURRENT COMPANY CAR DRIVERS SEE BEING OFFERED A COMPANY CAR AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR DECISION TO TAKE A JOB

SEE THE COMPANY CAR'S VALUE AS IMPORTANT



59%



72%

SEE THE LEVEL OF VEHICLE CHOICE AS IMPORTANT

CALL TO ACTION

- Company cars and the technologies available through them continue to be a strong staff retention tool as part of a balanced remuneration package.
- In-car technologies can support increased productivity and further enhance the company car as a staff retention tool, but they should support the comfort, safety and driver experiences, rather than being purchased just because they are high-tech or innovative.
- Providing electric or hybrid vehicles within the business fleet or company car scheme can help support an organisations' and employees' aim for more environmentally friendly technologies and lifestyles.
- Employees wishing to have 'greener' company cars must ensure the vehicle can match their driving needs and that they have regular access to charging points etc.

DRIVERS' NEEDS TOMORROW

When selecting vehicles and technologies for the business fleet or company car scheme, there are a number of factors that may change the policies supporting them.

CULTURAL CHANGE

Society's increasing focus on environmental concerns means that a growing number of organisations may need to embrace electric-only or hybrid vehicles as part of their business fleet and company car scheme. This is highlighted in our survey which reveals the need for organisations to offer a range of ultra low or zero emitting electric vehicles.

62%

OF COMPANY CAR DRIVERS THINK IT IS VITAL THAT SOCIETY REDUCES THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT CAUSED BY CARS

Manufacturers are also responding to cultural changes by enhancing their vehicle specifications and options to better reflect the gender equality of drivers on UK roads. While some manufacturers have focussed on gender neutral vehicles, others have created vehicle specifications aimed solely at one gender or the other. Vehicle choices within the commercial fleet and company car scheme will therefore need to better reflect this gender equality.

GENERATION Y & Z – THE IMPACT ON COMPANY CAR SCHEMES

Perhaps the biggest cultural change concerns vehicle 'ownership' as a whole. The next generation of employees will be more used to leasing technology, such as mobile phones and accompanying software, rather than owning them outright.

This could affect how a company car scheme operates – drivers may want access to a wider pool of cars, rather than a single vehicle which they can call their own. With this option, they would be able to match their vehicle with the specific type of travelling taking place.

Similarly, better travel management systems could mean employees actually have no need for access to an individual vehicle – especially if they live in towns or cities. Whether for work or social reasons, an employee could take the train then use a car club vehicle to drive from the station, rather than doing the whole journey by car. On longer journeys, this could be more cost and time effective.

The next generation of company car drivers will also be used to being fully connected all of the time. In the absence of safety-related legislation, such as those governing the use of handheld mobile phones, they will expect vehicles being offered to them to reflect this need.

COMPANY CAR LEGISLATION AND TAXATION

Benefit in Kind (BiK) tax rates are likely to continue reflecting the CO₂ emissions of a company car, with different bands for lower and higher emitting vehicles. Obviously, there is the possibility that taxation policies could change in future budgets. In the meantime, employees with low emission vehicles will still benefit from reduced tax payments, but the CO₂ level to qualify for the cheaper tax bands is likely to continually reduce over coming years.

Importantly, in 2020 new BiK taxation comes into force affecting vehicles with a CO₂ emission level of 50g/km or below with the ability for zero emissions. They will have the opportunity to reduce the levels of tax based on their zero emission range capability – the distance they can travel on a single charge.

The choice of vehicles being offered in a company car scheme must therefore reflect the needs of employees who want to benefit from a company car but want to avoid a high tax burden.

CALL TO ACTION

- Culturally, vehicles within a business fleet or company car scheme will need to reflect the gender equality of drivers and the environmental concerns held by society.
- Changing attitudes towards ownership, and enhanced travel management systems, could mean that employees want access to a pool of vehicles rather than just one company car.
- Being fully connected while in the car may be vital for the next generation of drivers, and the vehicles and technologies offered to them must reflect this.
- BiK tax will continue to impact employees using company car schemes, increasing the need for ultra low or zero emission vehicles as part of the scheme.