

DfBB Women in Transport Podcast:

Ashlee Field, DPD Group

Anne-Marie:

Welcome to the Driving for Better Business podcast. In this series we're celebrating women working in transport, fleet management, and road safety. Driving for work is one of the biggest risks to the business. With me today I'm very pleased to introduce Ashlee Field, Road Safety and Partnerships Manager, DPD group UK.

Ashlee, welcome to the podcast. How did your passion for improving safety on the road come about?

Ashlee:

What a great question! Back in 2018 we were asked to provide support to a local school and being an expert organiser I took on the challenge. So, I organised the vehicles, the staff, the content and how we would promote road safety, and all the goodies we took with us. We engaged with over 500 children from reception to year 6 and that started my passion for road safety.

Anne-Marie:

When you went to the schools did the children really understand what you were telling them?

Ashlee:

Initially it was difficult – the reception age group was difficult. When you started to get year 1 the engagement increased. One of the things we noticed was that the teachers were flabbergasted to see a truck and trailer on site and they were interested in coming to find out about it. We took onboard the elements of blind spots and making sure you're visible and standing in the right areas so the driver could see them. They really understood that. Yes, it's difficult but actually some of what you are teaching them is something they already know, and it gives them an opportunity to see what it looks like from the cab as well.

Anne-Marie:

Yes, it's so important to make it real and a brilliant approach you took there. Let's talk about DPD. What's the DPD approach to managing work related road risk. How do you monitor driver behaviour without it feeling like Big Brother?

Ashlee:

There are tons of ways you can look into driver behaviour. The most basic version is the digital tachygraph reader that tells you a lot of things on what might be going on with the drivers on the road. It will also give you potentials like if you have a conversation with that driver it can tell you that the route is not necessarily suitable based on the fact there's road works or additional traffic or the times they hit it are not convenient because there are schools in the area – it's worth having a conversation with the driver first and foremost. Some of what we do is data based like telematics, monitoring harsh braking, hash acceleration and fuel economy. Other things are in cab cameras – these show you things from the road view such as dash cam footage and you also get a view in the cab as well, so it's a good way of looking at it. One of the things we are quite keen on is being open and honest with our drivers, so we encourage sharing of best practice with peers. We like them to have a conversation with each other on how they've improved their driving styles based on telematics and their apps. They can look at what they are doing on the day, and we basically put them at the heart of anything we are implementing or new into DPD.

We are lucky at DPD that the drivers know we monitor their driving to improve their driving styles and it gives them better coping strategies on the road which gives us a better version of our Driver CPC and it means they are doing a smoother journey which is important to them.

Anne-Marie:

Brilliant. I like the idea of really involving the driver in changing the overall behaviour and approach to driving – and sharing the practice is what we need to do more often. We know there's been a rise in home deliveries & the additional demand this must place on companies must be huge. How does DPD handle the conflicting pressures of safety and timed deliveries.

Ashlee

Home deliveries have skyrocketed. It's been a very difficult 2 years and everybody across any version of delivery or collection has felt that. At DPD we have an exceptional planning team and state of the art tech to plan routes and time deliveries effectively, so all of our routes are planned so that the driver has enough time to complete delivery or collection, have their legal breaks and complete any other tasks like refuelling or charging the vehicle. It is not always easy to plan for everything like accidents and additional traffic due to roadworks that have gone on longer than planned or events that are happening all disrupt everyone's schedules. What we do is plan for the maximum amount of time for travel between delivery and collection points which

means they have more time hopefully. In terms of back end when they have breaks, they have more time to sit down and relax before they go back on the road and then it plans for the typical traffic flow. If for example you look on Google maps it says your travel time – we always give the maximum suggested time for travel. I would always advocate you follow the traffic flow of the area and you're aware of that. One of the last things we rely on is the drivers themselves. It's their route, their area, they are well versed as to what is going on in their area and they will always know the best way to get through a situation - traffic or accident – so always go back to the drivers and have a conversation with them because they can tell you the best way around it.

Anne-Marie:

Great advice. The impact on actual customers is minimised as well – so customer service doesn't go down in your opinion?

Ashlee:

Yes – it's at the heart of what we do – the end point. Things like the app has enabled us to add more time needed to the end customer, so drivers know that the person needs more time to come to the door and things like that. The end customer needs to be aware that 'look out your window, there's a lot of traffic!'

Anne-Marie:

Let's talk about awards you've won. The corporate safety award from the Institute of Couriers and Road Safety in the Community Award as part of the Brake Fleet Safety Awards are just 2. What made the community award so special?

Ashlee:

They are fantastic awards and I'm exceptionally proud of them. It was my first year in road safety, so I was really proud of them. I think it's important to give back to the community as a resident and as a worker. My job takes me across the UK, so I am going into different areas all the time, and I think it's important to give back. We've got around 13,000 drivers delivering or collecting parcels around the UK over a 24 hour period which is massive. Most of these pass through our 5 hubs in the Midlands and 2 of the biggest hubs are in Leicestershire and until 2015 we didn't have a huge presence in that area. I wanted to create a partnership with the community to let them know what we offer, what benefits we give to the local area, and given the recent influx of DPD vans and trucks, education in the local community on our vehicles was a top priority for me and raising awareness of road safety is always invaluable. Since 2019 we've engaged with over 5000 people across the UK – that's just community side, not anything internal.

We also have the community fund at DPD which enables any of our DPD people to request funding to support local charities and causes.

Anne-Marie:

Such a worthwhile thing to do. We talked about the work you do with schools and colleges. How does this benefit the students and their future employers?

Ashlee:

I am all over this. I engage in the future workforce aspect. I do my best to spend time with our future workforce, so I've signed up to be an ambassador for T Levels – have a look at the government website – basically it's another route to post-16 studying, similar to an A Level or college course giving you additional on the job experience - about 40 days on the job. There are only about 11 routes, but they are looking to expand that in the future. I am also an enterprise advisor at a local school in the Leicestershire enterprise programme providing business support to the school on career guidance so I attend a virtual call or meeting or go into the school, and we look at ways they can improve their career guidance. From a business perspective it's also how DPD can encourage other businesses to help the school with career guidance as well.

I attend events at schools and colleges like mock interviews, speed networking relating heavily to STEM subjects which is a huge focus for anyone who works in logistics and transport so that's another thing I try to do. For me, that gives the students practical experience of talking to a human being that works in this side of the environment, which also gives the students opportunities to explore avenues they haven't explored before. We can showcase the other opportunities and career paths at DPD which I think is fantastic.

Anne-Marie:

How do you manage to do all of this within 24 hours a day?? You're clearly passionate about road safety and you're making differences where you're working, so what benefits does DPD see from promoting road safety in the work you've done?

Ashlee:

Road safety benefits are subtle It's one of those things that you have avoided an accident which you never knew you were going to have is the best way to put it. This is how I explain it to my senior management team. Improving road safety is a continuous strategy. Something you promote and educate but it needs to have a direct link to the business and it's important to remember that. Road safety is a subject area that is so

broad and it's hard to narrow down to business specifically. I look at collision rates, incident rates, vehicle damage - why has that vehicle been damaged that way? Can we minimise that? What that does is minimise road risk, so a lot of what we do relates back to the DPD culture – which has existed before me - DVSA recognition status and that shows we're obviously committed to improving and we are honest with them about what's going on. Internally we look at our commitment with our audits – looking at what we can improve and what we can review and that goes for our policies and procedures as well. We try to remain up to date with what's going on with road safety. Improving road safety on the roads basically reduces your incident rates, your vehicle damage, your costs, and ensures you minimise road risk and the best way to work that out is through your insurance details. They will tell you and help you in figuring out how that links back to your business directly.

Anne-Marie:

One final question – how easy it is for other organisations to have a road safety advocate in their organisation?

Ashlee:

There's always someone who will have a passion for it same as I have. I would encourage where possible to harness that passion – support them and allow them to develop with links to internal and external stakeholders. It's really important you talk to the people you're working with internally – who you're trying to influence and why. Make friends with departments and organisations that can improve your road safety management- like Driving for Better Business – I'm an absolute advocate for you guys as we share the same passion and it gives you ideas to help spread that creativity in terms of road safety. Be prepared for long term goals – it's not a quick thing. Results don't happen overnight - it takes data analysis, research, stakeholder reengagement and that's before the intervention even goes live. My last point is road safety improves best when there's a solid plan and everyone is willing to engage and advocate to gain results. Although you may have one person that works on road safety – it's still everybody's responsibility.

Annemarie:

Ashlee, Thank you – brilliant and sound advice. Thanks for joining us today – and if people want to know more about Driving for Better Business and the benefits to managing and reducing your road risk take a look at the website

www.drivingforbetterbusiness.com