



5 Safety Campaigns

You Can Use For Your Driver Training Program



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Introduction To Safety Campaigns

The year Mark G . Gardner turned 30, he was running a break-bulk terminal in Bath, PA. The terminal was the result of Ryder Truck Lines and P*I*E's merge . Once in his new role, Gardner hired 300 locals and started moving freight off the docks at record speed . He quickly made a name for himself, but his notoriety in the industry wasn't only because of operational efficiency . Gardner shook things up in the safety department as well .

Soon after he started, Gardner began sending out tangible, dimensional objects on a monthly basis to all of his employees. The objects were all related to safety and called attention to a specific safety concern. One month, everyone received rubber grips with a note that read "Get a grip on safety." The next, they received a gold lapel pin that said "Attitude" with a letter describing how attitude affects safety. The objects may seem to only be tangentially related, but in reality, Mark Gardner was running a safety campaign.



What is a Safety Campaign?

In short, a safety campaign is a concerted effort to focus on specific safety-related issues. It raises awareness, educates, and promotes distinct and related safe behaviors. Its goal is to reduce accidents and injuries among a specific group of employees, such as drivers or technicians. A campaign could be ongoing, but it works best as an event with a specific start and end date. Your campaign could last a month or it could last a year with multiple releases. The important thing to remember is that you must cover a specific issue and do so with multiple touch-points.

A safety campaign contains a combination of various activities and media. Activities are specific behaviors or processes in which your employees participate, while media are simply means of communication.

ACTIVITIES	MEDIA
Coaching	Videos
Meetings	Posters
Contests	Web-postings Marketing
Observations	Materials Radio
Surveys	Announcements Printed
Quizzes	Announcements

Those are some high-level examples of activities and media that could comprise a safety campaign. The best safety campaigns use a blended approach, meaning they include as many methods as possible to educate the audience. This way, you can account for different learning styles and engage your audience with varied forms.



Why Should You Run Safety Campaigns?

How much do you remember from your math class freshman year? Unless you are solving linear equations in your job today, you probably don't remember much of anything. It works the same way with defensive driving and other safety concepts for your drivers. What they learned in CDL school is not top of mind years or even months after they graduated. As a result, in the absence of ongoing safety campaigns, your drivers are sure to develop unsafe habits.

In Avatar's experience of working with clients in the transportation industry, new drivers cause the most accidents. However, drivers are nearly as likely to cause an accident around the seven-year mark of their career. That's because these drivers are so far-removed from what they learned when they first started professionally driving. They are no longer steeped in defensive driving. And, because they've been driving so long, they reach a level of driving skill where they no longer actively think about the risks around them. It's called [automaticity](#), and it leads to many preventable accidents caused by professionals. Safety campaigns solve this problem.

With safety campaigns, all of your drivers—newbies and veterans alike—will have a renewed focus and dedication to safe driving practices. Whatever your campaign focuses on will be what your drivers focus on. Safety campaigns are a cornerstone to any company that would like to reduce its accidents.

Choosing Subject Matter

You want your safety campaign to have the biggest impact possible on your accident rates. Thus, the best safety campaigns for trucking companies focus on [loss indicators](#). What are the behaviors that most often lead to accidents with your drivers? Failing to maintain an adequate following distance? Merging without [Looking Around](#)? Backing without getting out and looking first? If you don't know, it's time to do some internal research.

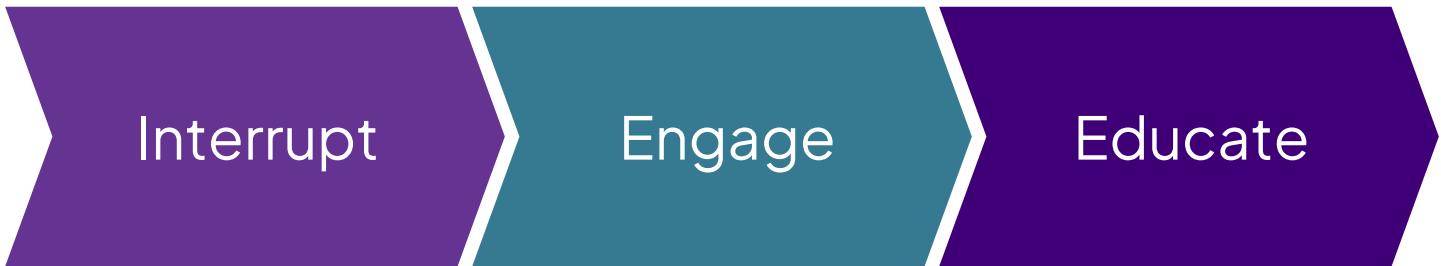
Once you've chosen your topics, you must aim your safety campaign at correcting these behaviors. You must be as specific as possible in doing so. You need to do more than say "stay safe out there" or "look out for the other guy." Your safety campaign needs to focus on changing specific, concrete behaviors to improve safety. If your company suffers from frequent rear-end collisions, you should have a safety campaign focused on reminding and educating your drivers on maintaining a safe following distance. Doing so will have a much greater impact on accident results than simply reminding your drivers to "stay safe."

Developing Mindshare

Thus far, we've focused on the what and the why of safety campaigns. The how is just as important, but it's the most overlooked. Running a safety campaign is not as simple as just making the information available to your drivers. You have to develop **mindshare**.

Mindshare is a marketing term that describes the level of consumer awareness on a specific product, good, company, or even an idea. Simply put, it's the amount of attention people pay to one thing compared to another related thing. In relation to a safety campaign, you must develop mindshare with your audience (your drivers) by convincing them to pay attention to your campaign over less worthy demands that their job presents.

How do you develop mindshare? There's a three-step process to do so:



Interrupt

Engage

Educate

Also known as **The Marketing Equation**, this three-step process has been developed by psychologists and successfully implemented by marketing departments for decades. However, it directly applies to education as well. Educational psychologists argue that, especially when it comes to adults, **people are resistant to learning new information**. That's why you must interrupt and engage before you can educate. Otherwise, your audience will not be persuaded to listen.

At a high-level, interrupt means to grab the attention of the audience or to persuade your audience to listen. Engage means you hold their attention long enough to deliver a message. Educate is the delivery of your message of the safety campaign. However, to actually put these to use, you need a deeper understanding of each.



Interrupt

Understanding how to “interrupt” your safety campaign’s audience begins with a crash-course on neuroscience as it applies to persuasion. We process information through our five senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. Of course, there’s a lot of information in our environment that we don’t notice. Imagine if you processed and responded to every stimulus around you. It would be impossible to function. That’s why we have a part of our brain called [the reticular formation](#). The reticular formation filters out important information from unimportant information. Essentially, it decides what we pay attention to.

Interestingly enough, the part of our brain that houses the reticular formation is shared with nearly every animal on the planet, all the way down to reptiles. It’s called the Reptilian Complex, but it’s also known as the old brain. It developed about [500 million years ago](#) while other parts of our brain developed only a few million years ago. As described by author [Patrick Renvoise](#) in [Neuromarketing](#), the old brain is our decision maker. It uses its limited understanding of the world to make snap decisions, usually within one second. In fact, the old brain is so limited that it only understands 6 things: the self, contrast, tangible, the beginning and end, visual, and emotions. It uses these six things to make virtually all of our decisions. Namely, it uses them to decide whether or not to pay attention to something.

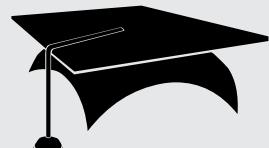
Think back to Mark Gardner’s safety campaign. He sent out tangible, visible objects that were in contrast with his audience’s expectations and typical work environment. This was an effective way to interrupt his drivers and convince their old brain to pay attention to his safety messages.



Engage

Once you’ve interrupted your audience, the next step is to engage them. You have their attention momentarily, now you must keep it. You do so by promising to solve a problem for them. We call it [WIIFM: What’s In It For Me?](#)

Before adults are willing to learn something new, they want to know why they should learn it in the first place. How will it make their lives better, easier, or more enjoyable? Never shy away from explaining this. For example, if you’re running a safety campaign on maintaining a safe following distance, you should immediately highlight how easy it is to leave room in front of you, how much safer it makes you, and how it will make your job less stressful. Otherwise, your drivers will not feel compelled to do so.



Educate

Once you’ve interrupted and engaged your audience, you are finally ready to educate them. [Education](#) is the sharing of knowledge. It’s all about learning concepts, principles, and mental processes then committing them to memory. You can educate your drivers on driving behaviors like the importance of load securement, the minimum safe following distance when driving a tractor-trailer, or why they need a spotter before backing. You can educate your drivers through safety meetings, online lessons like A-Fleet, or a train-the-trainer model like [LLC](#). Regardless of the learning outcomes and methods, you must interrupt and engage before you can educate your audience.

5 Safety Campaign Ideas

Monthly Safety Initiative

One of the most common and effective safety campaigns are monthly safety initiatives (MSI) . An MSI consists of monthly safety meetings where each meeting covers a specific topic . The meetings can include a variety of different media and activities (see the table from earlier), but most often they include videos, activities, quizzes, and discussion questions for your group to do together .

An MSI normally lasts a calendar year . Each month should focus on one of your leading losses, such as maintaining a safe following distance, proper lane changing and merging, and intersections and turns . You can use a new poster, print reminders on paychecks or announce over dispatch each month to promote the MSI . This way, you can interrupt and engage your employees in order to ensure active participation in the initiative .

Event Video Recorders and Safety Pledges

If you haven't already invested in event video recorders like Drivecam or Smartdrive, we highly recommend you do . They show you what really causes your accidents and near-misses . That way, you can protect your drivers from fraudulent claims and coach your drivers when they make a mistake . Moreover, you can turn your event video recorders into a safety campaign by utilizing safety pledges .

Every month, have your drivers sign a document pledging that they will use a specific safe driving behavior to prevent accidents . Then, if they have a near-miss or accident involving that behavior, have a one-on-one meeting with them . Go over the event video recorder footage . Ask them what they would do differently and coach them through the mistakes . Reference the safety pledge, and have them pledge that they will change their behavior going forward . For even better results, pair this campaign with your monthly safety initiative that we discussed above .

“Roadeo”

People respond to competition, especially if there is a reward tied to winning . It's a form of positive reinforcement . That's why hosting a “roadeo” is such an effective safety campaign . Bring all of your drivers off the road one day and onto the closed course . Have everyone compete to see who can most effectively perform all of your closed course exercises . Offer some type of reward to the winners such as free meals, gifts to their family, or something as simple as an award or plaque . For those who struggle with the exercises, offer coaching so they improve their driving skills . For the best results and participation numbers, effectively interrupt and engage your drivers by advertising for weeks in advance.

Online Course Bonuses

This one is simple . Offer bonuses based on completion of web-based defensive driving courses like our A-Fleet Professional Driver Course . If you don't offer bonuses yet, it's easy to implement this . Your drivers will be quick to participate in a defensive driving course for an end-of-year bonus . However, if you already offer a bonus, it's important to not make a course like this feel like a punishment . Your drivers won't respond well if they must go through an extra step to get the same bonus . They would feel cheated . It would be most effective to offer an additional bonus based on course completion .

Web-Based Lesson Bonuses

This one is simple . Offer bonuses based on completion of web-based defensive driving courses like our A-Fleet Professional Driver Course . If you don't offer bonuses yet, it's easy to implement this . Your drivers will be quick to participate in a defensive driving course for an end-of-year bonus . However, if you already offer a bonus, it's important to not make a course like this feel like a punishment . Your drivers won't respond well if they must go through an extra step to get the same bonus . They would feel cheated . It would be most effective to offer an additional bonus based on course completion .

Behavior-Based Safety Campaign

This is the most involved safety campaign we suggest . However, it also has the largest potential impact . A Behavior-Based Safety Campaign gets all of your drivers or safety-sensitive employees to hold each other accountable . It involves everyone in the safety process . It encourages and relies on your employees to take safe behaviors seriously before they turn into accidents .

The Behavior-Based Safety Process works by choosing the top ten unsafe behaviors that lead to the most accidents at your company . Most commonly, they are things like changing lanes without Looking Around, failure to rock and roll before and during turns, and failure to maintain a safe following distance . Make the top ten unsafe behaviors known to your employees and explain exactly what needs to be done to prevent these unsafe behaviors . Next, track these behaviors on a chart visible to everyone . Ask your employees to mark down every time they see someone perform an unsafe behavior . Of course, they shouldn't give the person's name . They should simply mark on the chart when they see someone perform an unsafe behavior .

Here's an example of how the chart should look:

Behaviors

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	TOTALS
Unsafe Following Distance	XXXX	XXX	XXX		X	9
Failure To Rock And Roll	XXXX	X	XX			4
Backing Without A Spotter	XXXX	X	XXX			5
Exiting Vehicle Unsafely	XX XX	XXXX		X	X	15
Not Wearing Safety Vest In Yard	XXXX	XX		X		13
	X	X				
Not Looking Around Before Turning	XX XXXX	XX				4
Not Getting Out And Looking Before Backing	XXXX			X		6
Not Wearing Seatbelt In Yard			X		X	7
Texting And Walking In Yard	XXX	X	X			7
Unsafe Lifting	XXXX	XX	X	X		8
	XXX		X			

Behavior-Based Safety Campaign (cont.)

By charting these unsafe behaviors in a public space, you're changing the culture of your company. You're going from a company that accepts unsafe behaviors to one where everyone finds unsafe behaviors unacceptable. To really enforce this, set goals for reducing these unsafe behaviors to zero within a certain timeframe. Reward your drivers if they reach this goal, and make the rewards clear from the beginning.

Here are the six easy steps to running your own Behavior-Based Safety Campaign:

- 1 . Investigate** what unsafe driving behaviors lead to your accidents . Pick the top ten behaviors that cause the most accidents .
- 2. Hold a meeting** where you introduce the Behavior-Based Safety Process and the top ten accident causing behaviors . Explain the importance of the process, why your drivers should participate, and the impact it could have on the company .
- 3. Set goals** with your team for reducing these behaviors (e.g . how much they will be reduced by and when) .
- 4. Explain the rewards** for goal achievement .
5. Spend some time every day **encouraging people to be involved**.
- 6 . Set aside time every week to **update the chart totals** .

This is an in-depth but highly effective process for reducing your accidents . It makes everyone accountable and creates a culture where no employee finds unsafe behaviors acceptable . As a best-practice, don't run this year-round . Remember, safety campaigns are events . Running this as a special event once or twice a year will have the greatest results .



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