



UK Excellence Award Judging Submission

Excellence in People Engagement & Development

Submission By: **National Express**

Section 1: What you achieved

- What results are you getting and what has the feedback been?
- How are you measuring the benefits?
- How are you sustaining the momentum/ outcomes?

At National Express, safety is one of our core values. It is essential that we keep our passengers, our teams and other road users safe at all times. We engage in a number of checks for our vehicles, often going beyond legal requirements and our own global standards, to ensure that they are in perfect condition for use on the road. We also don't forget the role that all of our people, including our drivers, have in making sure everyone stays safe, and our duty as a business, to engage and develop our people like we maintain our fleet.

This is why we worked to transform our driver management processes by introducing new ways to develop driver performance and help them to be their best, while creating a psychologically safe workplace for those drivers.

There are a number of ways in which driving standards are monitored, such as via a fatigue monitoring system, or a telematics system reviewing incidents such as harsh braking. Once a driver has triggered a risk incident, such as having a short following distance, National Express standard then requires a manager to sign that the incident has been reviewed and coached with the driver. The number of risk incidents are tracked as a KPI across our depots. At one depot in particular, there was a significantly higher number of high-risk drivers than other operators within the National Express business. Investigating this led to a review of how we identify and manage driver risk as a





whole, and whether we are creating an environment where drivers can succeed. Using our 4D improvement project structure (Define, Develop, Deploy and Determine, based on DMAIC) we transformed our processes resulting in a whole range of benefits aside from just reducing the risk in that depot.

Results have been great - following the change the depot went from having the most drivers requiring sign-off to the lowest, marking a 79% reduction between August 2022 and January 2023. There has also been a reduction in accidents which is evidenced by drivers now also having more awareness of their own risk and having the confidence to speak out when they have concerns. We have subsequently seen that work has begun to replicate this improvement across other garages, with reviews also taking place to monitor KPIs and ensure that we are able to maintain the good work we have already accomplished here.

Section 2: Why you did it

- Why are you doing what you are doing and what did you hope to achieve?
- How does this initiative support the strategic direction and values of your organisation?

One of the core values of National Express is People. We want our employees to have the knowledge and skills to make improvements to their work, and to feel empowered to do so. To enable this, we are embedding a culture of continuous improvement, with the vision of a business where everyone is working to improve how we do things for our customers and colleagues each and every day. So when the issue regarding the amount of high-risk driving incidents in one of our garages was raised, we knew that this would be an opportunity to use our improvement methodology to solve this problem and support our people.

The efforts made in this project to reduce driver risk aligns with our strategic goals to be the safest, be the most reliable and be the employer of choice. By successfully reducing our drivers risk scores we have made journeys safer. A reduction in risk scores also removes delays where drivers were unable to drive whilst awaiting sign-off from a manager. This has increased the number of drivers we have available and means we offer more reliable services to our customers. The changes made through this project completely changed the way that we as a business, and our drivers, view risk. It has led to us being able to create a workplace with a high degree of psychological safety whereby our





employees are now happier and feel that it is far more acceptable to share their worries and concerns with management because they know that support will be offered to them. All of this effort supports us to become the employer of choice, where our employees feel like they have the support of the business and that they are able to engage with the business in continuing to improve the way we work in the future.

Section 3: How you did it

- How did you go about achieving the results you did?
- How did you structure your way of working?
- How did you go about involving stakeholders, gaining their buy in and support?
- How did the team pull together to achieve an excellent outcome?

For this project to be a success it was essential that the right problem statement was identified at the outset so that we were able to identify the true root cause of the issues. By analysing data we already had around driver risk, we found that the longer a driver has to wait for an issue to be discussed, the chances of that driver's risk increasing becomes more likely.

This led us to take a closer look at driver management processes, by mapping out how each risk incident was managed. In total, there are 5 risk incidents that can occur and require some form of intervention or sign off from management. These could be regarding accidents, speeding, fatigue, driving style and complaints, which are recorded via various systems and technology.

To ensure the buy-in from employees, both the current state mapping and future state mapping was conducted with the input from those who would be affected by the changes. This helped to ensure that those involved in the process were fully engaged and supportive of any changes that were going to be implemented, those employees felt like their opinions had been listened to and it helped to create a real team feeling where everyone wanted to work together to ensure the best outcome for each other and the business. This was accomplished by team leaders and people managers feeling like they had support from above and were then able to properly consider the needs of drivers so that they could also be better supported as a result. An FMEA risk analysis was used to help identify potential obstacles and areas of concern so that they could then be proactively managed. An example of this is how the new approach to risk would have a potential impact on service, with the





focus being on risk over service. If we can't mitigate the risk after a driver has an incident, then the driver would not be let back into service until there had been some form of intervention.

Through redesigning the whole driver management process we were able to create a more joined-up approach to viewing risk as these were no longer entirely standalone processes that had no interaction with each other. This was managed through a driver intervention document that acted as a real-time tracker of all things risk related for our drivers. This document allows us to see risk scoring events as they happen and provides an opportunity for our operations teams to coach and improve driver behaviours before any sign-offs occur.

Section 4: What you learnt

- How was learning captured, actioned and shared to benefit others?

A lot of things were learned through implementing this project. The importance of identifying the right problem statement is one of those, by identifying the issue from the outset we were able to implement a solution that has had a genuine transformative effect on the business. Another example is how engaging people by making positive cultural changes can lead to a complete culture change which is evidenced by safer, happier drivers.

There are also lessons that were discovered around how best to actually complete this sort of project, such as the importance of a buddy system, which ensured that day-to-day matters could still be attended to whilst driving the improvement forward. Having two people leading the project allowed the momentum to continue to build and resulted in a better support system for those involved whenever setbacks occurred. Another lesson was around the importance of using the FMEA to help reassure those in leadership positions that you had considered risks and how best to mitigate them in order to ensure their continued support in helping to ensure the improvement was driven forward. The 4D structure proved to be invaluable in providing the necessary guidance for the project to be implemented and it left us with both a 4D Storyboard, and presentation at the end of the project allowing us to share the details of this work through internal newsletters, in conference presentations and it is being actively promoted by the Business Excellence team to encourage the changes that have been made to be replicated across other depots with the storyboard detailing the improvement readily available for employees to make use of.

