NARROWING THE FIELD

How to choose the right GPS Fleet
Management Provider

Fleet Complete®

THERE ARE SO MANY PROVIDERS, WHERE DO I START?

Today's GPS Tracking market is flooded with providers, all with different options and pricing. Simply put, there are some options that are more important than others. In this document we summarise all the "need to know" information and highlight some key questions you can ask providers when narrowing the field in your decision making process.

BUT WHERE DO I START?

Before you start researching who you might want to partner with it is important that you understand why it is you are looking to invest in a GPS vehicle tracking solution in the first place. This will then act as a first checkpoint when looking for providers to partner with. If they can't meet your basic goals or benchmarks then you should be able to rule them out straight away. The following are a few areas that you need to determine before starting your research:

What are your current pain points?

Your decision to investigate a GPS vehicle tracking solution had to have been triggered from somewhere, it is often to find a solution to areas of the business that need addressing. Whether this be from inflated fleet operating costs, not getting enough completed in a day or something unique to your business, it is important to identify what it is that you are looking to solve. This will ensure you stay on track when deciding on a provider.

What are your goals?

Besides finding solutions for your pain points it is important to drive further return on investment for the business to justify your decision to implement. Involve stakeholders from different areas of the business and analyse the key goals you want to achieve. These can be broad at the initial stages as a good provider will help you refine these more in the initial meeting stages as you also learn more about what system can do.

How will you measure success?

It is all good and well to set specific return on investment goals but it is important that you are able to measure the impact that the solution has had on your business. At this stage it is a good idea to record current measurements of your fleet's performance such as:

- Monthly fuel bill
- Number of trips made per day, during hours and outside hours
- Monthly payroll costs – focusing on overtime paid specifically
- KMs driven per month
- FBT reporting administration costs
- Vehicle maintenance costs, both scheduled and adhoc repairs
- Vehicle utilisation
- Average revenue per job assigned

This will then allow you to compare the results you are seeing post implementation, or at a lesser level notice some of these results improve on a trial basis.

WHAT WILL THE PROVIDER BE LIKE TO WORK WITH?

Research the provider

While at first glance you think you have found a solution that fits your business needs, what do you know about the provider? The key to a successful outcome is having the right partner from beginning to end – this ultimately will mean the success or failure of the solution and your bottom line. These questions can help you ascertain whether the provider will be around for the long haul?

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ How long has the provider been in business?

✔ Where and how many offices do they have? Do they have a local presence?

✔ How many customers does the provider service?

✔ How many employees does the company have, and in what departments?

✔ How is billing completed?

Can the solution handle my business size?

Besides finding solutions for your pain points it is important to drive further return on investment for the business to justify your decision to implement. Involve stakeholders from different areas of the business and analyse the key goals you want to achieve. These can be broad at the initial stages as a good provider will help you refine these more in the initial meeting stages as you also learn more about what system can do.

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ How many vehicles can the database support?

✔ As my fleet grows, can the database grow with it? Are their sufficient tools for managing your fleet such as: Are user licences paid per user? Can groups be implemented to manage my fleet, and is there a limit to these?

✔ Are there a limit to the number of Geofences I can use? Is there a limit to the things I want to monitor?

✔ Does the provider offer additional resources for large scale implementations and training?

✔ Can I control how many vehicles are displayed?

✔ Can I outsource the administration of the solution to the provider?

Installation

A quality installation can be critical to the success of your solution. A quick and smooth installation process can result in your organisation seeing immediate gains, where as a poor quality installation can result in endless issues with devices not functioning, poor quality data and will create a bad impression on your mobile workforce.

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ If the device is hard wired, who performs the installation? Are the installations quality tested? Do the installers go through any accreditation process? Do you have to co-ordinate the installs yourself? Does the provider expect you to coordinate with a third party?

✔ If the device is plug and play, is there any quality control over installation?

✔ How long does the installation take? How long will my vehicles be off the road?

✔ Can installations be completed outside business hours?

✔ How is vehicle information entered/uploaded into the system?

Training & Support

Product Training and Support may not seem important in the early days of choosing and IMVS provider compared to the feature set of the actual device but these factors play a major role in your day-to-day experience. At the end of the day, the results you get from the software are driven by who is running it.

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ Is training included?

✔ How in-depth is the training? How many sessions are provided? Is it live or pre-recorded?

✔ Is training conducted by a professional trainer or salesperson? Is it offered onsite or in-house or both?

✔ Does the provider outsource support or is it provided it directly?

✔ What are the hours of support? Can I get extended hours? How long does it take to get a response?

✔ Where is the customer service department located? Are they in Australia?

Development

Most suppliers may appear to offer everything you need on the surface, but what if you are looking for a solution that isn't out of the box? What if you are looking to integrate GPS tracking into an existing solution, can the provider do this?

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ Can the solution be tailored?

✔ Can I integrate existing technology?

✔ Does the software have an SDK?

✔ Is the solution future proof?

WHAT CAN THE DEVICE ACTUALLY DO?

With so many devices on the market and so many different features, it can be different to know where to start. Most providers claim to do the same thing but really they don't. We have made a list of what you need to know when purchasing a product, and the questions to ask your potential provider to ensure you get a quality, reliable product that will last, and that you get the data you need.

Data collection

GPS vehicle tracking products are all based on obtaining a position from the satellites and reporting it on a map. It may seem quite straight forward but all providers do this differently and with different levels of accuracy and quality.

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ How accurate is the GPS location? How many satellites do they use? Are there any delays?

✔ How often do the units Poll? Do they collect the information between Polls?

✔ Can the device report on Engine Diagnostics and Fuel Information? Or is it an Add-on?

✔ How are the devices powered? Does the ignition have to be on to be powered? What if the asset is stolen on the back of a truck?

✔ Can the device grow with my business? If I need to upgrade or add on a feature do I need to replace the whole unit?

✔ What is the failure rate of the devices? What warranty do the devices come with?

✔ Can the device record who is driving? *this creates accountability and is used for safety.

Coverage

Although the cellular network is good in Australia it's not perfect, it most certainly does not cover all areas of Australia. This being said, you need to know that your investment has a failsafe for times that it is not in mobile coverage areas.

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ Which telco provider do the units use to track? This is important as an inferior carrier may result in an unreliable product.

✔ Will the units continue to track while out of range? Will I lose any data?

✔ Is there any backup options if I am out of cellular range? And what are the costs associated? This is particularly needed for duress and accident notifications.

Driver behaviour

Advancements in technology have seen devices evolve from a 'dot on a map', to providing data on how your vehicles are being driven. Using accelerometer technology the device is able to record specific actions that result in safety risks, an inflation in costs associated with fuel and maintenance or damaging your company's reputation with aggressive drivers. This data can then be used to make informed decisions on which areas of the fleet needs improvement. Some of the cheaper devices on the market don't have this technology which should be a red flag straight away.

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ Will the device monitor harsh driving? If so can it alert the driver for coaching? Is it an add-on?

✔ What aspects of harsh driving can the device capture?

✔ Harsh Acceleration, harsh braking, harsh cornering?

✔ Can it help to create an overall safety score?

✔ Can the device detect an accident? If so can the solution send out a notification? And how?

WHAT ABOUT THE SOFTWARE?

Before you make your decision on your hardware, it is equally as important to check out the software. The features and functionality of the hardware are only as good as how they function in the software. Once the hardware is installed it will be the software that you are relying on from a day to day basis. Here we summarise some important questions you can ask about the software.

ⓘ Can the software be configured to require as little or as much intervention as you want?

Getting started & administration

Getting new software up and running can be challenging - but it shouldn't be. Gaining an understanding of how the software is setup will ensure that you are not exposing yourself to hidden costs or hindering an efficient rollout. Equally as important as the setup is ensuring that the software is capable of being locked down for certain users ensuring privacy across the organisation.

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ Is it a cloud based solution?

✔ Is it possible to control who has access to the software? And what they can access?

✔ Do I require any help from IT to set up the software?

✔ Do I have the ability to customise the software just for me? Is this something I can do myself?

✔ Are there any settings that I can't change?

✔ What setup of the software is done for me?

✔ Do I get training on how to set up the system?

Mapping

For many customers, especially those with large fleets, the map will be one of the most frequently used areas of the solution. Keeping this in mind, how easy is the software to navigate, how many clicks does it takes to get what I need, and how intuitively can I do this?

Key questions you should be asking:

- ✔ Who is the mapping provider? Does the mapping provider update maps regularly? Are they detailed maps and can you see satellite imagery?
- ✔ Can I use my own maps?
- ✔ How much control do I have over what I see on the map?
- ✔ How often do the vehicles update on the map? *the more often the better as you may be looking at a vehicle on the map that is actually 5 min or 10 kms away.

- ✔ Can I see historic tracking data? If so to what detail of the trip and does it show their driving style?
- ✔ How difficult is it to find the closest vehicle to a particular address or other location?
- ✔ Can zones\geofences be customised? If so how? Can I set up notifications for these or groups for managing these?
- ✔ Can I send jobs and\or messages to the driver via Garmin or similar?

Reporting

Reporting is one of the most important elements of the software. This is how you'll measure how your fleet is performing. It will give you valuable metrics like idling, speeding, harsh driving, kms driven, hours worked, fuel used and more. If it's not easy to use and understand, it can make it difficult to get true results from the system. Pay close attention to what's shown and the value it delivers.

Key questions you should be asking:

- ✔ How do you summarise activity of the entire fleet, a certain group or number of groups, not just one vehicle at a time?
- ✔ Can I report on driver activity AND vehicle activity?
- ✔ Is there flexibility to view data for time frames exceeding one day or one month at a time?
- ✔ Can I customise the reports?
- ✔ Does the software have an easy to read dashboard? Can this be customised?

- ✔ If I don't have the time or resources for this can the provider do it for me?
- ✔ Can the reports be set up to run automatically and email tome or a group of users?
- ✔ How do I use the solution to audit employee timecards?
- ✔ Can the solution record my mileage and produce a Logbook for FBT reporting?

Alerts

Reporting on valuable metrics is one thing but can the software be configured to send alerts? For example, can the software send me a message if a driver is involved in an accident or can the solution warn the driver if they are speeding or idling for too long? It is also important to know if and how these alerts can be configured to ensure that you are only getting the required information you need and not a tidal wave of irrelevant notifications.

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ What types of alerts can be set up?

✔ Accident? And how are they sent? SMS? Email?

✔ In cabin alerts for driver coaching? Service & Maintenance? Theft?

✔ Can you configure the frequency of alerts? How are alerts triggered?

✔ Can I set up my own alerts to measure my own critical KPIs?

✔ Can I set up notifications around zone activity? For example can I get an alert if my vehicles leaves a 'safezone'?

Mobile access

With today's technology allowing us to work more and more mobile is it critical that you can access valuable software from a mobile device. The key is to find out if the functionality of the software is only available in an app with limited functionality.

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ Do I have access to the full solution or is it a cut down version?

✔ If it is only available on an app, is it available for my type of device eg. iOS and Android?

✔ If it is accessed through the browser of the app is it cumbersome and difficult to use on a tiny screen?
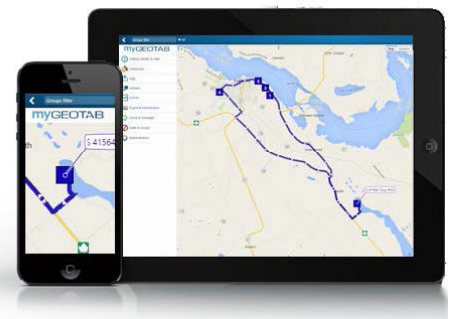
ADD-ONS, DO I NEED THEM?

Add-on options have become widely available for GPS vehicle tracking devices as a way to further customise your solution and maximise the functionality required to meet your business goals. For some businesses these Add-ons are a must, but do you need them? Here are some details and key questions to help you decide whether or not you require them:

Duress

Knowing where your staff are is one thing, but can your drivers notify you if they need help? Or at a minimum, will the devices notify you if there is an accident? Here are some questions to help you determine what you need and if the solution has what you need.

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ **Will the devices send accident notifications? Is this standard or an add-on? How do they send the information?**

✔ **Do your staff work remotely from the vehicle?**

✔ **Do your staff work in remote areas? Will the device be able to communicate outside mobile coverage?**

✔ **Can the device be integrated with duress buttons? Are they in-cabin or remote duress?**

✔ **Does the provider offer a managed solution to support after hours duress?**

In-cabin communication & navigation

A key part of a successful operation is the communication you have with your mobile workforce throughout the day. This is often combined with an in-vehicle navigation system allowing the driver to navigate between jobs while receiving any updates regarding jobs or messages from the office. It becomes a much safer and more efficient way to communicate with staff instead of having to constantly make phone calls. This device really depends on the nature of your business, if you have a mobile workforce that spends their entire day driving between jobs this may be for you:

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ **How many stops do your drivers make each day? Are they continually changing locations from day to day?**

✔ **How often are you required to call your drivers throughout the day?**

✔ **Are you often required to update your drivers on changes that have been made to their route or extra jobs that are required?**

Satellite Navigation Systems provide an excellent return on investment for companies making them a valuable investment in their own right. Some IVMS providers use their own branded systems, but going with an independently branded device, such as a Garmin, ensures that if you ever decide to change or remove vehicle-tracking systems, you won't have to buy all new in-vehicle navigation devices.

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Collision avoidance

Collision avoidance systems are a relative new technology in the fleet management space. Unlike IVMS which are aimed at preventing accidents through driver re-education after the event, Collision avoidance systems are designed to prevent accidents from occurring by warning drivers of imminent danger in real time. Most commonly these systems are OEM, meaning they are installed in the vehicle when manufactured. Some providers are able to re-sell these same solutions as an after-market option, often for a fraction of the cost, making them a very valuable safety tool.

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ Look into the brand of the system, is it a reputable company you can trust? Do vehicle manufacturers use the same technology?

✔ Is the provider accredited to install the system? Is there any quality control on the installation?

✔ How does the system warn drivers? And what are they warnings?

✔ Can it be integrated into the IVMS to report on driver behaviour?

✔ Can the settings be customised based on the customer requirements and size of vehicle?

✔ Ask if you can have a demonstration of the system?

Asset tracking

Outside of the standard vehicle tracking device, Asset Tracking devices have become more and more popular for tracking non-powered assets such as trailers and lighting towers and the like. If your providers offers a solution for these and your business has a need for these, here are some important questions to ask?

Key questions you should be asking:

✔ What do the devices look like? How big are they?

✔ Are they waterproof?

✔ How much do they cost to operate? Data charges?

✔ How long do the batteries last?

✔ Can they be integrated into the current software or do they need a separate application?

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