

March 2018

Daryl Dickenson Transport

CASE STUDY

Don't reinvent the wheel: balancing growth and the safety journey for smaller organisations

Staff: 50

Fleet: 30



NRSP
NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY

**PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAM**



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Organisation: Daryl Dickenson Transport

Staff: 50

Fleet: 30



Case Study:

Stay the course — balancing growth and daily demands with a stronger safety focus

Key Outcomes:

- Safety is a journey not a destination, with the best performing organisations constantly trying to improve
- Improving safety while meeting the demands of business growth is difficult but achievable
- Information and resources are readily available to help organisations improve safety performance, including safety networks, and 'competitors' are always willing to share knowledge when it comes to safety
- Most companies are on a safety journey – you're not alone, even though you may feel like it
- Everyone in the organisation must be on board for safety performance to improve: management's actions and decisions must reflect the importance of safety and employees and drivers must have input into measures that affect them
- Plan a staged implementation of safety measures rather than trying to achieve everything at once
- Consulting employees and drivers, and allowing them to provide consequences-free feedback, promotes engagement
- Be prepared to stay the course – return on safety investment takes times but your safety performance, bottom line and reputation will benefit.

Synopsis:

When a family member was injured at work, the owners of Daryl Dickenson Transport knew safety needed to become a stronger priority for the new organisation. Balancing safety with business growth wasn't easy, but the company found help where it thought it was alone on its safety journey and is now reaping safety, bottom line and reputational benefits.

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Introduction

As a steel carrier, Daryl Dickenson Transport (Dickensons) handles an inherently dangerous load multiple times and in several locations every day. Consequently, load restraint is the biggest safety risk it faces, making having drivers and staff adequately trained to ensure loads are properly restrained its biggest safety challenge.

This fact was driven home in the company's early days when a pack of steel fell on a family member, who was driving a truck for the business, pinning him to the ground.

The incident resulted in serious injury but, thankfully for all concerned, not a fatality. However it did serve as a wake-up call for Daryl and Tracie Dickenson. Having then recently started the business after 13 years of Daryl being an owner operator, they were unaware of the level of responsibility they now had as the people running the organisation and employing staff.

Since then, Daryl Dickenson Transport has embarked on its own safety journey, introducing a range of measures, including driver training, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and 'going dogless', all in consultation with drivers and with the support of company management.

While it's not been easy to stay the course, particularly as the company grew rapidly, the safety measures introduced have improved Daryl Dickenson Transport's safety and injury performance while benefiting the company's bottom line. It has also helped build a positive reputation in the industry, helping the company attract and retain quality drivers and a solid customer base of blue chip companies.

Company Overview

Daryl Dickenson Transport is a family owned and operated business specialising in steel, breakbulk and container cartage with warehousing, distribution and container unpack facilities.

Established in 2001 by Daryl and Tracie Dickenson, the small business has grown from an owner driver transport operator to a company that employs 50 staff.

Operating out of its Yatala base in southern Brisbane, Daryl Dickenson Transport is predominantly a steel carrier across Brisbane and northern Queensland but also services the rest of the state and the eastern seaboard. Its Yatala premise has a fully operational workshop with two full time diesel mechanics and an on-site fabricator.

Coupled with an extensive subcontractor network, the company carries steel in various forms, including coil, plate and beams, often as extended, wide or high loads.

Daryl Dickenson Transport's 30-strong fleet includes prime movers and body trucks and trailers. The fleet is registered under the National Heavy vehicle Accreditation Scheme and is maintained to their standards.

On the safety front, Daryl Dickenson Transport adheres to [BlueScope load restraint guidelines](#) and participates in and complies with the latest State Occupational Health and Safety Acts and Regulations in cooperation with many road transport industry groups and codes of practice.

A signatory to the [Australian Steel Industry Logistics Safety Code](#), the company holds accreditations in [Truck Safe](#) and [NHVAS](#) Maintenance, Mass and Fatigue Management. It is a member of the [Queensland](#) and [Australian Trucking Associations](#), [NatRoads](#), the Safety Leadership at Work Group and the [Transport Safety Network](#).

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You're Not Alone

The incident with the family member highlighted that Dickensons needed to increase its focus on safety.

Co-owner Tracie Dickenson realised the company needed more information about its obligations and how to maintain a safe operation, so she invited a small business advisor from Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) to visit the company's Wacol warehouse.

The advisor explained the key health and safety factors to focus on and highlighted safety risks the company needed to address. Dickensons found WHSQ's approach was more as an industry partner helping the business address concerns rather than focusing only on monitoring or compliance and 'beating the company with a stick' for its safety failings.

At this point, Dickensons also appointed one of its drivers, who had previous experience in workplace health and safety in the construction industry, to manage safety compliance in the company. It soon became clear that the 20 hours a week allocated was not enough and he became full time compliance manager, working with Tracie Dickenson to improve workplace health and safety at the company.

The company found out about the WHSQ advisory service through a local Transport Safety Network meeting. Dickenson Transport has been a regular attendee at the free quarterly meetings ever since.

Created and coordinated by WHSQ, up to 500 industry operators meet regularly across eight local networks to highlight areas of concern and work collectively to devise 'low-cost, high-impact' safety measures to address them.

The network aims to build cooperative relationships among transport operators and for WHSQ to be seen as a partner rather than an adversary. While WHSQ provides advice when required, the primary focus of these networks is to provide information, support and opportunities for employers to raise concerns, discuss incidents and responses, and improve workplace health and safety in the transport industry.

Particular attention is paid to 'off-road' issues causing significant levels of injury, such as working at heights and managing the risks of falls; loading, unloading and securing loads; and hazardous manual tasks. Safety showcases are also organised and specific expertise will be brought in to discuss particular concerns.

Industry participants set the agenda and the minutes from each network meeting are shared among all 500 network participants, so that industry can learn from industry.

While they may be competitors during operating hours, transport operators are willing to share safety information to help create a safer industry overall. In particular, Tracie Dickenson has found, smaller operators benefit from the willingness of larger companies to share knowledge.

Larger companies often have more resources to devise and test safety initiatives, allowing smaller organisations to implement similar programs without having to 'reinvent the wheel'.

In addition to learning from other companies, the Transport Safety Network highlights to participants that there are many companies in a similar situation, demonstrating there are others in the same situation and they're not alone in tackling safety.

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On-the-Ground Safety Measures

Driver handbook, induction and training

The first step in Dickensons' safety journey was introducing a Driver Handbook to outline to drivers the company's expectations. Along with the accompanying induction and training, the handbook illustrates to drivers they are the company's most valuable asset and Dickensons' focus is on ensuring they return home safely each day.

The Driver Handbook is an evolving document that is regularly updated as the industry and safety landscape change. Updates are communicated through an annual induction process.

Drivers also receive a second round of annual training that revisits the company's primary safety risk, load restraint, as well as common tasks like tarping and coupling.

Drivers are asked if they would like training on other specific topics, which is incorporated into the day. Near misses and incidents are also discussed, including sharing photos drivers have taken of such events.

All company management and employees responsible for loading trucks have completed BlueScope load restraint courses and share that information at training days and in daily operations.

Gone to the dogless

A major safety measure Dickensons introduced was removing all lever dogs from its fleet because of the recoil and head injuries they can cause.

While 'going dogless' was a significant expense, and meant drivers needed to be retrained in using other load restraints, the move also reflected changing expectations among Dickensons' customer base. New load restraint guidelines are expected to outlaw lever dogs, putting Dickensons a step ahead of competitors still using them.

As part of the transition and helping drivers understand reasons for the change, they were asked what alternatives they preferred. The result was the company now only uses web dogs and maxi binders.

GPS and retraining

Another major landmark on the Dickensons safety journey was introducing Global Positioning Systems (GPS) in its trucks. While drivers initially resisted, believing the company would be watching their every move, their concerns were allayed when management demonstrated the system and how the data would be used.

GPS data tracks three key areas – harsh braking, excessive revs and speeding – with contraventions used to educate rather than punish drivers:

- Harsh braking, particularly in urban situations, indicates drivers are following too closely
- Excessive revving shows drivers are not changing gears at the right stage, increasing fuel use and component wear and tear, particularly on clutches and transmissions, and
- Over speed monitoring reduced public complaints about tailgating and has also reduced fuel use.

Non-compliances will be discussed with the driver. If the driver is unable to correct the behaviour, extra one-on-one training will be provided, from a more experienced company driver or by employing external driver trainers.

Safety areas consistently causing problems or other trends the company notices via GPS tracking are also highlighted in a monthly company newsletter sent to all drivers and subcontractors.

Buddy drivers

When a new driver joins Dickensons, they are 'buddied' with an existing skilled and experienced driver, who assesses the new driver in safe operating, gear changes and braking. That information is provided via a questionnaire to management who will then discuss progress with the new driver.

The buddying period lasts 2-3 weeks, depending on progress and how the new drivers feels they are performing.

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Results

The safety journey has driven a multitude of business benefits for Daryl Dickenson Transport. Safety performance has improved and injuries have reduced. That has translated into a range of bottom line benefits, including reduced WorkCover costs and insurance premiums and, as demonstrated by the introduction of GPS, reduced operating costs. Driver retention rates are high and the reputational benefits of being known for safety has spread, with drivers contacting the business asking if there are openings for work and a growing list of clients choosing Dickensons as a preferred supplier. Those reputational benefits have also translated into more 'blue chip' clients, allowing Dickensons to charge premium rates for a superior service.

Source: Rio Tinto Vehicles & Driving PFI presentation

Improved Safety Better Reputation

Dickensons' monthly safety meeting has highlighted that injuries have significantly declined over time. If employees are injured, the company has a return to work program that makes light duties available to employees, minimising their time away from work.

Reduced injury rates have contributed to Dickensons building a reputation for safety, which is translating to winning work. Clients are increasingly expecting the companies they choose to work with to have a high regard for safety, particularly 'blue chip' companies like BlueScope Steel.

A more stringent focus on Chain of Responsibility (CoR) legislation in recent years has also made Dickensons' focus on safety a bigger corporate advantage. The company has calculated that safety adds \$1 a tonne to the cost of its services, which it explains to its clients because with that investment comes peace of mind their goods are transported safely.

Its increased focus on safety is also being recognised across the industry with the company winning the Queensland Trucking Association [Industry Safety Award](#) in 2016 and its safety improvements playing a role in co-owner Tracie Dickenson being named the 2017 [Industry Woman of the Year](#).

Driver loyalty and demand

That reputation and recognition has also filtered through to drivers, with the company having a waiting list of half a dozen drivers at any one time wanting to work for Dickensons.

As well as fostering loyalty through prioritising the safety and wellbeing of its drivers, the company has recruited young drivers and provided them with training to progress from a car licence through the range of trucking licences. Drivers must prove their ability in each stage for extended periods, often 12 months, before being supported to obtain the next licence. If those younger drivers eventually choose to drive interstate routes, Dickensons has negotiated with its insurance company that they will only travel a certain distance and between specific hours.

As well as Dickensons having confidence in those drivers' abilities because the company trained them, providing such opportunities promotes loyalty among drivers.



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Bottom line savings

In addition to reduced insurance premiums and savings in operating costs, the bottom line advantages of Dickensons' focus on safety are best exemplified in its WorkCover costs.

Its WorkCover premiums, for example, were double the industry average and had reached the maximum cap. At that point, WorkCover visited the company and reviewed its procedures, working with Dickensons to address areas that could reduce costs.

From a cap of \$33,000 a month, the company's premium has dropped to \$19,000 a month, a drop of more than 40 per cent.

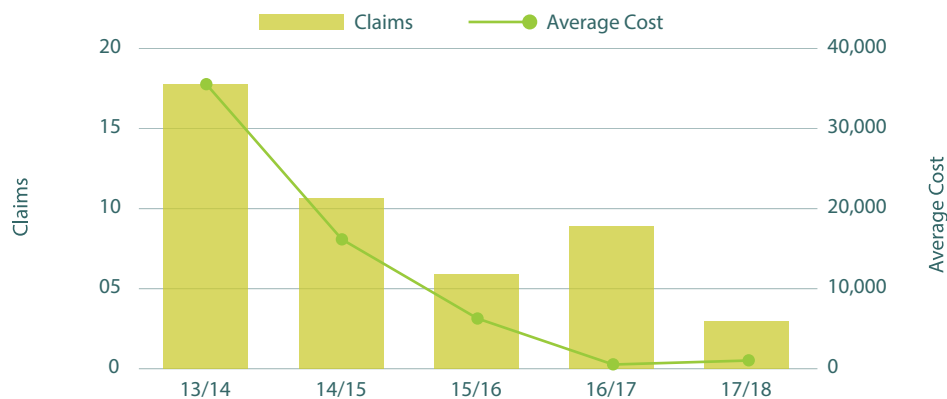
Total annual WorkCover costs have dropped to almost one-tenth of the cost, from more than

\$600,000 in 2013/14 to about \$66,000 in 2016/17, and average monthly payments per claim have dropped by a similar proportion, from more than \$16,000 to just \$1,700.

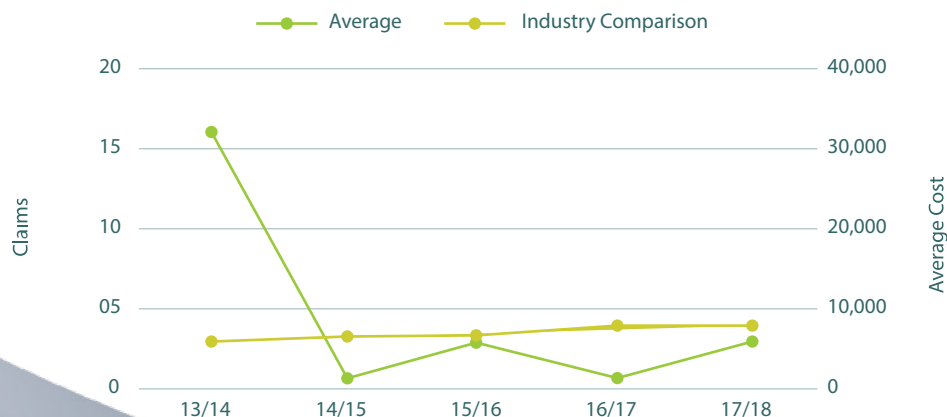
The number of WorkCover claims has halved and days between injuries have almost doubled over the same period.

A survey of company drivers and other employees, completed as part of the WorkCover review, also validated Dickensons' approach, confirming personnel understood the reasons safety measures were being implemented and felt comfortable raising concerns with company management.

New claims by injury date (statutory)



Average monthly payments per claim



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Keys to Safety Success

Networking and accessing information

Sourcing information, particularly through networking and forming relationships with other transport companies, has been a key reason Dickensons has improved its safety performance.

Participating in the Transport Safety Network and learning from other companies' safety lessons has been critical in implementing effective measures as well as reinforcing to Dickensons it was on the correct path and many others were on the same journey.

The company is also a member of the Queensland Trucking Association and NatRoads and often seeks further information about safety snippets contained in their newsletters.

Forming relationships with other transport companies has allowed Dickensons to contact them to discuss how that company is addressing specific safety issues. When it comes to safety, in Dickensons' experience, companies are willing to share information with their 'competitors'. Larger companies also share safety alerts, particularly with companies who subcontract to them.

Take employees with you

At the start of its safety journey, Dickensons explained to each driver individually the reasons for introducing safety measures. This approach also gave drivers an opportunity to raise concerns. The company then went a step further, communicating to drivers they can refuse to unload onsite if they believe it is unsafe. In that situation, drivers contact company management who will come to the site and deal with the situation.

When drivers expressed concern that refusal would result in Dickensons losing work, the company

response was it would rather lose a client than a driver.

The company's attitude helped bring drivers on board and overcome initial resistance from drivers, making its safety journey a much smoother ride.

Communication is key

Communicating with employees is critical in improving safety, both in implementation and to highlight near misses or unsafe practices that could result in harm. However, that communication does not always have to be safety related. Simply regularly asking drivers about their day makes drivers more receptive to speaking openly to management, leading to an increased willingness to raise safety concerns. Often drivers will already have a solution in mind to issues they notice.

Safety has progressed to the point where if company owners or managers forget to wear 'hi-vis' or use correct protective equipment, drivers and employees are comfortable reminding them to do so.

Communicating with clients, particularly in raising safety concerns raised by drivers, is also important to improving safety performance across CoR. Changes in CoR legislation have made it easier for companies to approach safety concerns with others in the chain.

In Dickensons' case, a growing reputation for safety and customers that expect a high level of safety also means clients take the time to listen. In fact, Dickensons has regular safety meetings with several clients, discussing incidents and sharing lessons learned.

Eye in the cab

Introducing GPS devices was another landmark in the company's safety journey allowing, for the first time, Dickensons to receive reports about what was actually happening in its trucks. This allows the company to discuss specific issues with drivers and provide targeted training. Improving safety through improving driver behaviour also flows through to the bottom line, reducing operating costs such as fuel, repairs and maintenance.

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Implementation Challenges

Two key challenges Dickensons faced in implementing safety measures were maintaining a focus on safety while dealing with the pressures of a growing business, and driver pushback.

Any change is met with a certain amount of resistance – people are comfortable with procedures they know. In Dickensons' case, an 'I've been doing this for 100 years and never lost a load' type of attitude had to be overcome.

The company brought drivers on board by simply speaking to each one, outlining what the company was trying to achieve while giving drivers the chance to air any concerns. It was also made clear to drivers that all feedback was valuable and there would be no personal repercussions for sharing their thoughts – this 'Just Culture' approach underpins Dickensons' attitude.

The pace of growth made it difficult for Dickensons to maintain its safety focus, with safety threatening to make way for daily operational demands like

sourcing drivers and equipment. The company owners made a conscious decision to maintain the size of the business at a 'comfortable' level, realising that every time they added someone to the payroll they were also increasing risk and responsibility for those people. In Dickensons' case, the focus shifted from continued expansion to working with blue chip companies prepared to pay a premium for high levels of safety and service.

Going the extra mile

Daryl Dickenson Transport has been working in tandem with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland to publish safety videos to help all transport companies on the safety journey:

- [Managing your drivers safety at delivery points](#)
- [Preventing workers falling from trucks](#)
- [Safe systems to immobilise heavy vehicles and trailers](#)



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Key Lessons

- Everyone in the company has to be on the safety journey together. Management need to see results and reflect the importance of safety through their actions and decisions. Employees and drivers need to be consulted and have the opportunity to provide feedback on safety and related issues that affect them and see management act on it.
- Employees and drivers are the most valuable asset you have in your business, so always look after them.
- Have a staged implementation. Often when companies begin the safety journey, they try to do too many things at once, overloading drivers and employees involved. Introduce one measure and move onto the next item when the previous item is working effectively. The analogy Dickenson's shares about its safety journey reflects climbing the driving safety mountain one step at a time.
- Improving safety takes time so be prepared for a long-term investment. It took a few years for Dickenson's to see a return on the effort it invested in safety but it is now reaping the safety, bottom line and reputational benefits of staying the course.
- Regularly revisit outcomes to ensure any improvements introduced are effective and working as intended.
- Safety is a journey not a destination, and you are constantly addressing issues and striving to improve. "I think it's a journey. I don't think there is a destination because it's ever evolving and there's always room for improvement," Tracie Dickenson says. "You can never sit in your seat and say 'I've got it done because you don't'. We're dealing with humans and humans make errors and all we're trying to do is make sure they make it home safe for the night."