

Advances in technology might be good for trucks and vans, but what about society?

Ironically, in a world that is fast becoming obsessed with social media, the act of being 'sociable' is fading fast and our industry is not immune to this trend.

With people happy to hide behind emails, instead of picking up the telephone, the art of human interaction is fading. And, simultaneously, the level of misunderstanding from written instructions is rising and, in some cases, proving catastrophic.

Imagine an electronic job sheet in a technician's workshop, specifying a list of items that need replacing. Or work that needs to be carried out on a given truck, trailer or other commercial vehicle. The information might say that an off-side headlight is out, an oil change is due in 1,000 miles and two tyres are below minimum tread depth.

Those assignments may have been programmed to match a specific vehicle. But what if the computer file or email got lost, corrupted or even deleted? Or what if the email made it through, but there was missing information and the sender of the email was not available?

Either way, the technician is overly-reliant on technology. The best-case scenario would be lost time (and money for the operator, whose vehicle is not out on the road) spent trying to find out the identity of the person that sent the email.

What about the worst case? The tasks for two faulty vehicles get mixed up and the technician carries on regardless, blindly trusting the technology over his own training and judgement.

The role of the human being should never be underestimated – an aphorism emphasised by irtec, which ensures that technicians' competence remains at its peak, and reiterates the need for clarity and care on the job.

Technicians will also be among the key figures at the Commercial Vehicle Operator Show, from 13–15 April, where the top technician of the year will be announced. It's also this year's main opportunity to get out from under the phone and email, and meet and greet your peers, to share experience, ideas and best practice.

Don't be afraid to get up close and personal in Birmingham. It could do you a favour ”



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Transport Engineer's regular 'IRTE to IRTE' members' column: focusing on the issues, challenges and concerns that matter to transport engineers and fleet managers