

THE ROLE OF AI IN TRANSPORTATION AUDITS, COMPLIANCE, AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- As legacy trucking and transportation companies race to stay ahead in a competitive market, incorporating AI into compliance processes is a mandated necessity both from market forces and government agencies.
- Executives face pressure to remain relevant and increase efficiency with AI tools while still honoring the culture and people that ultimately drive the industry's success.
- Fleetworthy's CEO and President Michael Precia does not mince words when insisting upon the enduring impact human beings will continue to have in an industry embracing new AI technology.

Fleetworthy — a provider of cloud-based compliance, risk mitigation, and safety solutions for 1,500+ commercial fleets — is “dabbling” with AI, but doesn’t see machines completely replacing humans any time soon.

Michael Precia, Fleetworthy president and CEO, told TT’s Michael Freeze in an interview for the [RoadSigns Podcast](#) that his company is testing AI functionality “where it makes sense,” alluding to a measured approach that leaves intact “belly-to-belly” human elements.

Fleetworthy’s significant presence in the transportation ecosystem makes its approach to incorporating AI noteworthy as a potential bellwether for a people-centric industry reshaping its identity for future generations of American workers, customers, and businesses.

A chorus of ‘wait and see’ from industry leaders qualifies AI advancements

Precia is not alone in underscoring the limitations of AI-based technologies. .

Many transportation executives are [publicly urging restraint and patience with regard to automation](#), citing among other things potential infringements upon the values and human elements unique to the industry.

For example, two-way cameras equipped with AI installed in the cabs of trucks primarily face forward to record data and images as a way of tracking driver performance. Activating the lens facing the driver's face, however, may represent a cultural change that drivers aren't ready for, according to Taki Darakos, vice president of vehicle maintenance and fleet services at Pitt Ohio.

AI capabilities such as predictive maintenance and automated reminders to renew expiring documents are less invasive features that can increase efficiency, but are not perfect and always require human decisions to finalize important actions.

"We're leveraging technology where it makes sense," Precia said, noting that machines can be used around the clock, all day, every day. He said the company is leveraging AI for the "science that's in compliance ... simple data that you can leverage technology to consume and crunch."

Overall, Fleetworthy aims to balance the attributes of its people with the efficiency of tech. "Our large staff of client services professionals with a lot of tenure and experience in the industry are always going to be a big part of the company," Precia said.

Conversational voice interface: A case study that speaks volumes

In fact, some AI tech has already been adopted by transportation industry compliance teams: Conversational voice technology (akin to speaking with Siri or Alexa).

By incorporating a familiar, accessible tool into their workflows, companies are aiming to democratize access to data by enabling quick access to information previously relegated to the realm of data scientists and executives.

Game-changing as the ability of a driver to chat with a bot about predictive trends and logistical insights may seem, voice-prompted access to databases isn't without complications.

Privacy concerns remain an issue, as chatbots may have difficulties verifying the identities of users *and* assigning appropriate access designations.

Questions have also emerged surrounding the training and expertise required to avoid the "garbage in, garbage out" problem endemic to many AI predictive language models that need nuanced, explicit inputs in order to generate useful responses.

In some cases, asking highly specific follow-up questions can yield useful information, but the need for fact-checking, prompt engineering, and overall security oversight remains a high hurdle limiting efficacy.

AI as a co-pilot, not an end-all solution (for now)

Precia refers to Fleetworthy's "three-legged stool" of "human beings, software, and the understanding of data."

He sees various areas of operations where it is necessary — and required — to have humans in the loop. For example, human-to-human connections are still required to vet new drivers, he said.

Employee onboarding is another area that depends upon tapping into intangibles computers can't interpret (yet), and companies "[still need] the safety and performance histories [that require] reaching out to prior employers to make sure that person is a safe driver."

Right now, engaging with compliance audit representatives remains a fundamentally people-centric endeavor. "It's still a person [from the government] who knocks on your door, sits down with you and wants to start analyzing what you guys are doing right or wrong," Precia said.

But he acknowledged it might not always be that way. "Until the government says, hey, our audits are going to be done by a computer or artificial intelligence, we feel that the human aspect of our business is very important," he noted.

This article is based on an episode of Roadsigns, a podcast exploring the trends and technologies that are shaping the future of trucking. [Check out the website to catch past and future episodes.](#)