

AVOIDING THE PITFALLS IN YOUR LCV FLEET

Six key tips

1. SIZE MATTERS

Half-full vans means paying for space you're not using and inefficient fuel use. Overloading your vans also uses excessive fuel, while risking vehicle damage and prosecution.

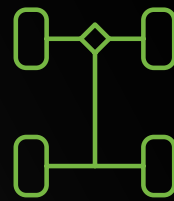


2. TO DUAL OR NOT TO DUAL?

Four wheels at the back of a vehicle doesn't mean you can carry heavier cargo – although it improves stability for specific situations, it just adds weight to the vehicle. Unless you have a recurring need for a high-sided vehicle, or you need to tow regularly, it is worth just hiring in a four wheel rear as and when you need the specific capability.

3. DRIVE TRAINS

There's greater payload on a front wheel drive vehicle than on a rear-wheel drive, so unless you're towing regularly consider front wheel drive. Electronically-managed gear changes have also optimised fuel consumption in automatics – manuals may not always be the most efficient these days.



4. THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAIL

Focus on vehicle specs that match your business needs 95% of the time – specialist vehicles can be hired as and when they're needed.



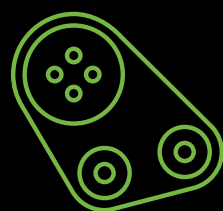
5. CONSIDERING CONDITIONS

In many cases, 4x4 capability in winter is unnecessary. Investment in winter tyres and driver training could serve you just as well.



6. I HAVE THE POWER

You could be wasting fuel and paying excessive tax on larger engines. Today's 1.5l engine has the same power as an old 2.5l one, so focus on matching power outputs, not engine size, to your operating needs.



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Deciding to renew or expand your LCV fleet is a big investment decision and, when you're busy running a business, it's easy just to replace like for like. But doing things the way you've always done them might not be the best option.

New technology and a changing regulatory and tax environment means there are new opportunities and challenges in fleet management. Our fleet specialists have come up with a list of considerations to help you avoid some of the common pitfalls of LCV acquisition.

1. SIZE MATTERS

To make your vehicles as efficient as possible, it's important to have the most appropriate size vehicle for the job in hand.

If your vans regularly travel half full, you'll be paying for space you don't need and incurring higher fuel consumption. If you overload your vehicle you'll not only risk damage and face high fuel costs, but you'll also be breaking the law.

Our engineers carry electronic weight plates, so they can check weight carried by your vehicles when they visit your site. That means they can assess the required weight capacity and provide advice on the best vehicle for the job.

2. TO DUAL OR NOT TO DUAL?

It's a bit of an industry myth that having four wheels at the back of a vehicle means you can carry more weight – in fact, the opposite is true. Although it provides extra stability when you're towing or using a high-sided vehicle, and creates extra-grip, dual rear drive adds weight to a vehicle. That means more fuel and less goods being carried. Obviously, driver safety needs to be considered at all times, so the extra stability may support Duty of Care responsibilities in certain situations. If, however, the need for dual rear wheels is sporadic, a business should consider hiring these vehicles as and when they are needed.

3. THE DRIVE TRAIN

Unless you're towing on a regular basis, you can carry a greater payload on a front wheel drive vehicle than on a rear-wheel drive.

More and more businesses are also turning to automatic vehicles for their fleet. The old days of higher fuel consumption are long gone. These days, electronically-managed gear changes means that fuel consumption is optimised.

4. THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAIL

There's a bewildering array of specifications available in the LCV market. Considering usage is crucial. Working out exactly what you need is where our experts can really add value.

If, for example, you're buying a vehicle with a 4m load bed because three times a year you carry something that's 4m long, it could be more efficient to procure a smaller vehicle that you'll use 95% of the time and hire a larger vehicle for those odd occasions when it's needed. The operational savings, in terms of upfront and ongoing running costs will outweigh the occasional hire costs.

Investing upfront in quality racking can make your drivers more efficient and prevent items from being damaged. Similarly, if your drivers spend hours in the cab, air conditioning can make a real difference; if they're in and out making deliveries, it's just an added cost.

5. CONSIDERING CONDITIONS

Some businesses will procure 4x4 capability for the winter. In many cases, it's unnecessary and you'd be better served investing in winter tyres and driver training. In typical UK weather conditions, unless your business is critical, these could serve you just as well.

6. I HAVE THE POWER

If you still think engine size refers to engine power, think again. As engines have become more environmentally friendly, size has reduced, but power has increased.

Today's 1.5l engine has the same power as an old 2.5l one. What's important is matching the power output to the operating conditions of the vehicle, for example, you don't need 150bhp for deliveries in an urban setting. The penalty for choosing the wrong one? Higher fuel consumption and taxation costs.

To avoid the pitfalls of LCV acquisition and help you get the right fleet for your business, contact our Lex Autolease specialists today.