

SUSMILE Synthesis note

Capsule 3.4.2 – Sources analysis

In this Capsule, we have provided different sources of information, not as case studies but varied angles through which we can reflect the evolution of the drivers' skills and behaviors in urban logistics environment.

All sources are complementary, though they focus on a specific aspect due to their creator's position at the time of publication. Teachers may want to select only some of them in order to best direct their students toward specific messages, aligned with their program development. Please note that although all documents can be read by any student, whatever their level, we recommend EQF level 4 learners to focus on the sources' summary for S2 and S4.

The objective of this Capsule is to emphasize on the evolution of the job for delivery personnel and the type of skills required to both perform in the company and reach high-level service quality towards final customers.

The missions of delivery personnel in urban logistics

The driver's profession has long carried this image of autonomy, solitude and independence. Often with a stereotype of a male profile, with a strong character, to the point that in some countries there have been advertising campaigns to remind people that "truckers are friendly".

These different sources of information therefore enable you to put into perspective all the changes that have accompanied these professions, particularly in the urban environment, where interactions with a large number of players are necessary and a new important role for the driver-deliveryman with the end consumer.

1. Organisation and efficiency

Last-mile delivery drivers in urban areas are subject to performance indicators and a high delivery rate. However, unlike traditional "business to business" routes, from a supplier site to a customer site, the approach to the urban environment requires a number of constraints to be taken into account:

- Parking space
- The means and capacity to deliver the products
- The specificities of each customer site (especially for multi-point delivery)
- Traffic conditions
- The behaviour of other road users

They may be assisted by new technologies and GPS tracking tools, but they remain in control of the vehicle in the face of numerous possible hazards (work, accidents, etc.). Moreover, the additional distances or difficulty in parking represent a management cost to be taken into account, which reduces the company's operating margins (e.g.: cost per hour of the driver, fuel, tyre wear, etc.). On the other hand, the lack of means or space to deliver in the best conditions also represents a risk of accidents at work, physical and moral stress on the deliverers, who face the impatience of other road users in case of double parking, etc.



It is therefore both an in-depth reflection for the manager of the transport company to work with its customers to deliver in the best conditions, use the best route optimisation tools, etc. But it is also, and above all, an essential ability that drivers must have to take account of their environment in order to be as efficient as possible, both in terms of customer satisfaction and perfect control of operating costs.

2. Driving expertise

Driving a professional vehicle is not just about controlling a large vehicle in a confined environment. The economic and environmental constraints imposed on the transport sector require drivers to have real expertise in handling their vehicles. Adjusting speed, accelerating or decelerating in an optimal way are only the most well-known aspects, but vehicle maintenance, gear shifting, choosing to switch off the engine when stationary are all subtleties that they must also ensure.

The slightest energy saving has an impact on the environment, with more efficient use of equipment, but also on the economic model, since the margins of transport operators are very low. Here again, there are more and more technologies, or motorisation, or information systems, which make it possible to accompany driver training for better control of their vehicle and cost optimisation. This evolution implies understanding these new tools at the service of driving and are part of the performance indicators of the profession.

Many training courses exist for what is known as "eco-driving" and aim to provide future professionals with all the keys to these new constraints. Knowing that the urban environment and its users are also evolving, this gives us many more years and opportunities to develop the professional driver's profile.

3. Safety in a complex and evolutive environment

The safety parameters are much more complex in the urban environment than on intercity routes. The number of objects and obstacles increases, the number of mobility actors increases and all traffic rules are multiplied. Therefore, and in the knowledge of the restricted visibility around a delivery vehicle, the behaviour of the drivers is also significant with regard to the risks of the road.

For this reason, public authorities are also mobilising to develop urban infrastructures around this danger without totally preventing last mile logistics from operating. Many discussions are underway to involve the various stakeholders and their needs and constraints, but progress varies according to the context, funding and planning possibilities.

4. Customer relationship

Last but not least, the interface between delivery staff and the end customer has significantly changed the type of behavioural skills expected in recruitment. Last mile logistics involves going to the end users of a product, whether they are local shopkeepers and craftsmen or the direct end consumer. Delivery drivers represent the brand image of their agents and must therefore, whether it is their own transport operation or a subcontracted one, be vigilant about the attitude they convey and the representation they give to this public.

Quality delivery requires respectful handling of products, respect for delivery times and conditions, and above all professional and courteous interaction with third parties. As the latter rarely have a good understanding of the constraints of delivery and their behaviour can be frustrating for the delivery



personnel, it is important to learn to deal with these attitudes in order to remain professional in all circumstances.

In view of the impact of ratings and comments on digital interfaces (social networks and others), transporters and logisticians have clearly understood the increasingly strategic importance of this customer relationship, since consumer behaviour is directly affected and this implies economic sanctions by shippers on the use of their fleet.

Conclusion

The objective of this capsule is to reflect the evolution of both the environment of work, the number of stakeholders involved and the influence that e-commerce has had on delivery operations. Delivery drivers are at the centre of something new (though it has been a few decades already) which is the customer relationship. This has become strategic for transport and logistic operators as their major clients push for better performance standards in this respect, subject to which they will contract with others, better performing providers in line with their requirements.



Second part – Questions

EQF level 4

1. **S3** What are the objectives of a GPS app for drivers?
2. **S4** What factors affect most the vehicle energy consumption in order to best improve eco-driving results?
3. **S5** What is the objective of this training course document for delivery drivers?

EQF level 5

1. **S2** What are the most time-deviator factors in urban logistics?
2. **S3** What features are likely to involve more the drivers than before?
3. **S4** What are the main findings on eco-driving that you can draw from this study?
4. **S6** Which turnover is more important between long-haul drivers and urban delivery personnel? Can you explain why?

EQF level 6

1. **S2** What analysis can you make when comparing the different route profiles and products delivered, in terms of the time management of the drivers during their respective delivery rounds?
2. **S3** What are the advantages of a driver app for transport or logistic coordinators?
3. **S4** What key limitation needs to be addressed with public administrations and how?
4. **S6** Why is training so important for urban drivers according to the two companies interviewed in this article?