

TWENTY QUESTIONS TO ASK A FUEL EFFICIENCY CONSULTANT

There seems to be a growing number of people and organisations who describe themselves as 'fuel efficiency consultants' or something similar. In order to help vehicle operators differentiate between those that can deliver cost effective improvements and those who cannot, the following list of questions has been developed. The list is not exhaustive and contains three themes, which are knowledge, skills and experience.

The word 'vehicle' is used as a generic term, in use it should be exchanged for the types of vehicles used by the operator (for example, cars vans, buses, rigids and tractor units and trailers) and relate to the type of operation such as mobile engineer, tanker and tipper.

These are of course suggested questions; there are those that you may choose not to ask and those which you might adapt. Whatever you choose to do, never lose sight of the fact that you are questioning a person who may have an influence on one of your biggest costs and if you get it wrong it could have a major impact upon your business and its profitability. Last, but not least, beware of organisations who merely sub contract all or most of the work.

1. What is your experience in managing a fleet of vehicles like ours and what was your specific role (depot manager, fleet manger)?
2. What practical engineering experience (fitter, foreman, fleet engineer) do you have?
3. What other relevant roles have you had and for how long?
4. Have you ever driven a vehicle or vehicles like ours for a living and if 'yes' for how long?
5. What proven (not potential) savings have you produced in the past that can be checked through a quick phone call to the operator for whom you made the savings?
6. For how many other operators have you provided this service?
7. For how many years have you been providing this service?
8. Will you work for a percentage of the savings rather than a flat fee?
9. How do you propose to communicate with the staff in the business (drivers, operations managers and finance)?
10. What have you contributed to the industry in terms of advancing knowledge in the area of fuel efficiency? For example, objective articles published in the transport press, best practice guides or best practice case studies rather than just marketing type press releases.

11. Where and how did you acquire the knowledge that you have?
12. Why have you chosen to contact me?
13. What makes you think that you can make this operation more efficient?
14. Why should I choose you instead of any other fuel efficiency consultant?
15. What is the average improvement in fuel efficiency that you achieved for your customers?
16. What was the greatest improvement in fuel efficiency that you have achieved so far?
17. Do you collect, cleanse and analyse the fuel consumption data yourself?
18. For how long will this consultancy last and how much will it cost me?
19. Are you totally and completely independent of any potential suppliers such as: vehicle manufacturers; oil companies; anti siphon manufacturers; navigation or tracking systems suppliers; tyre manufacturers; fuel dispensing and monitoring equipment suppliers; fuel suppliers or any other supplier for that matter?
20. If I give you a sample of data from five of my vehicles produced over the last twelve months can you produce a report on the quality of the data including how to improve it and upon examining the vehicles that generated the data give me some idea as to the improvement in fuel efficiency you expect to make? All within the next four hours or before you leave the depot today?

Whilst all of the questions have their relevant importance question nineteen is important because an apparent consultant may simply be directing you to a manufacturer or supplier who pays them a commission or rewards them in some way. Question twenty puts the consultant on the spot. Any fuel efficiency consultant (and we are talking about highly paid people and presumably highly skilled) should be capable of delivering this. It is the one that proves the knowledge, skill and experience and is directly applicable to your vehicles and operation.

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