

# VJ Technology

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## Continuous Improvement with FORS Gold

VJ Technology is a market-leading distributor and manufacturer of technical fixings, tool, fasteners and associated products specifically for the UK construction and civil engineering industries.

The company formed as a business partnership in 1991 and, trading out its head office in Ashford, Kent, has grown to be a strategic partner on many major construction projects such as the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Heathrow T5, London 2012 and most recently Hinkley Point.

With our extensive technical product knowledge and experience within the construction industry, everything we do at VJ Technology is measured by the benefit we can bring to our customers.

VJ Technology has a highly experienced Technical team which works closely with a purpose-built, in-house UKAS Accredited Test Laboratory which is used to assess the performance of virtually any fixing, power tool or consumable in order to provide added benefit and value to our customers.

My name is Aarron Buss and I am the Fleet & Transport Manager at VJ Technology, I have over 20 years' experience in Transport and Logistics for both national and international B2B and B2C. I have been with VJ Technology for 10 years.

VJ Technology was originally introduced to the FORS scheme by several main contractors we were working closely with on the London 2012 Olympics and Crossrail projects and we very quickly realised that the FORS requirements were perfectly aligned with the company's own high standards of compliance, safety, and environmental impact. Being a company that always strives for excellence, achieving the Gold accreditation was our aim from the very beginning.



Our aim was always to reach the FORS Gold accreditation. With Bronze we improved our driver and vehicle safety, which is the core focus for VJ Technology in addition to improving operating procedures through effective monitoring of fuel and tyre usage.

## G3 - FORS mandatory Gold case study template

Once we had achieved bronze accreditation, it was a natural progression to achieve Silver and subsequently FORS Gold in 2017 & 2018. FORS provided invaluable training, tools and constant advice to assist in improving our systems and policies. FORS has helped us to understand and analyse our data in a professional way. As a premier fixings supply business, the progression from Bronze, Silver and to Gold is essential to communicate our dedication and commitment to raising the standard of road transport and WRRR while continuing to reduce our effect on the environment.

Through FORS provision, our vehicle graphics were supplied by RGVA, who are a recommended supplier of the FORS Vehicle Graphic Service are. We have also seen benefits from FORS affiliated fuel cards, discounted FMS and FORS practitioner workshops.

Due to the growth of the business and subsequent increase in mileage the figures listed in the table below do not show an improvement in fuel usage, we have increased the number of miles driven. Thanks to several improvements in technology platforms and software within our business in 2019, we are now able to utilise our vehicles to full capacity, improving routing and scheduling, which in turn makes us able to avoid heavily congested areas at peak times.

We now have less vehicles in central London and facilitate more deliveries without increasing our fleet size. It is unlikely we would be able to further improve on our fuel usage and emissions due to the nature of our business.

We do expect to see a minor improvement in 2020 once our new systems are fully embedded. Due to the nature of our business as a nationwide supplier, road transport is currently the only mode of transport available to us. Until recently, technology surrounding alternative fuel has not been suitable for our business due to the mileage travelled. However, recent improvements in electric vehicle range and the introduction of cargo bikes in many cities across the country, means we are now in the position to look forward to 2021 to procure our first electric vehicle.

We are also working closely with our preferred supplier, to be part of the initial launch of their cargo bikes in central London. Our drivers have completed LoCity e-learning and classroom-based modules. Drivers receive toolbox talks and briefings on the environmental impact of their vehicle and how to drive efficiently and safely. Our vehicle telematics systems report accurate data on driver behaviour and fuel efficiency, allowing us to challenge or coach our drivers to further improve on their driving safety and emissions.

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	Incidents	MPG	CO2 (MT)	NO <sub>x</sub> (Kgs)	PM <sub>10</sub> (Kgs)	Number of PCNs
2018	5	27.88	173.8	874.74	14.49	10
2019	3	27.53	189.88	930.27	15.45	8
Percentage Improvement %	66.6	-1.2	-8.4	-5.96	-6.21	25

Road safety is paramount to me as a transport manager and to our business whose core operation involves a large element of road transport. We have improved our incident statistics by 66 percent in 2019 and we seek to further improve in 2020. We are well on the road to achieving zero harm. We have done this by fitting the vehicles with telematics, and 360-degree five-way cameras. Both of which can be used to coach and challenge the driver and provides us with accurate data to inform further continuous improvements.

Our 3.5 tonne vans follow a 12-week preventative maintenance inspection programme. Although not a legal requirement I believe this is best practice to not only keep the vehicle in a safe and road worthy condition but also to keeping the vehicle maintained to a high standard helps to reduce our carbon emissions. Our policy for the replacement of tyres is to be completed at 3mm well above the recommended minimum legal standard.

We have lowered our PCNs by 25 percent through utilising FORS e-learning on parking and unloading, specific driver de-brief forms relating to parking and unloading. Our sales team are encouraged to ask our customers if parking and unloading is available and when PCNs are unfortunately issued, a full debrief with the driver takes place. We aim to reduce PCN's by a further 25 percent in 2020.

On employment and every two years, our drivers undergo a medical examination at a registered SEQOHS facility. Our drivers are required to report any medical issues as listed by the DVLA to their supervisor and any medication that may affect their ability to drive. As part of their daily vehicle checks, they sign a digital declaration to confirm they are fit and well to drive and are not under the influence of any alcohol or drugs.

Our drivers also have their eyesight checked every 6 months and if eye correction is required, they are removed from service and sent for an eye examination supported by our business. All drivers have their licenses validated and checked based on set frequencies by an external licence check provider.

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V J Technology is well known in the area as a decent and supportive employer, especially within transport. It is rare that we would need to advertise a driving position but when we do, our advert states that we are a FORS accredited organisation. Drivers undergo a full induction programme which includes a driving assessment, a medical and stringent background checks. Drivers then undergo several training objectives, which includes FORS training.

VJ Technology operates a warehouse to wheels scheme, not just confined to our warehouse. Any willing employee that meets a certain criterion will be given a full training programme which includes full category C licence. We are proud to say that our staff turnover is very low with no leavers in the past 24 months. An average length of service is 5 and a half years.

In 2019, V J Technology, carried out a full noise assessment of its operational activities. This included both deliveries to our own site and warehouse, our vehicles and to our customer delivery points. The results showed that our operation was no louder than a busy call centre except for the occasional, brief, peak point. Improvements that were made after this assessment were to introduce quiet pallet trucks to our own warehouse and our vehicle radios wired to switch off immediately as soon as the driver's door is opened.

As outlined above, our plans for the future are to introduce fully electric vehicles to our fleet, reduce the number of diesel vehicles, work with partners and suppliers on moving a percentage of our deliveries to cargo bikes and continue to build on our excellent safety records and promote road safety into other businesses, schools and colleges.



We promote FORS on our website where we will publish this case study. Our vehicles carry the FORS graphic. We promote FORS and road safety through social media and LinkedIn. I also promote road safety and environmental impacts from my personal accounts, and I have started to engage with local schools on road safety. Where possible we encourage FORS in our supply chain. We have several suppliers who are accredited to FORS.

As a business that already promotes a high level of road safety within its own organisation and beyond, accreditation to FORS gold will further enhance our status and our ability to reach customers, suppliers and other businesses in our quest to improve road transport. FORS gold accreditation would signal to staff in our own organisation that the work we do and the impact they have will be recognised.

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