

How To Ease Driver Resistance for a Successful Take-Home EV Program

By Kate Harrison, MoveEV, courtesy of automotivefleet.com



Dr. Alison Betz's insights underline the need for a strategy that acknowledges the human element of an EV transition, ensuring that drivers feel heard, supported, and part of the change rather than merely subjects of it.

Implementing a successful take-home electric vehicle (EV) program for fleet drivers involves a change in technology and a shift in behavior and mindset.

Unfortunately, resistance to change is a natural human tendency, and drivers may have preconceived notions about EVs (e.g., concerns about range, charging access, and how the vehicles will perform in a variety of weather conditions) that can make them naturally disinclined to make the switch.

While a top-down approach may seem like the fastest path to electrification, “decisions that are made at the executive level without involving those affected by these changes early in the process can lead to resistance and skepticism among drivers, ultimately

undermining the effort,” said Dr. Alison Betz, a behavior analyst at ABA Technologies who specializes in helping organizations modify driver behavior for improved safety and organizational performance.

So, how should an organization proceed?

Start With An ABC Framework Assessment

Betz uses the Assessment, Behavior, Consequences (ABC) framework with her clients. The first step of this approach, Assessment, is all about understanding drivers' current attitudes and fears. Betz said supervisors need to take a transparent communication approach to be effective.

“Start with the goal of thoroughly understanding drivers' concerns and attitudes about the forthcoming change,” Betz said.

For fleet managers, this could include engaging in meaningful individual dialogues with drivers, conducting surveys, or even setting up focus groups to delve into the drivers' psyche about EVs.

"You want to talk with the drivers and say, 'Hey — we are going to be rolling this out, and we want this to ensure this is smooth,'" Betz said. "Say, 'I am here to support you, and I want to talk about your concerns. Is there anything you see as an issue? What could you see going wrong?'"

Listening to the drivers' concerns helps identify situations and behaviors that could make the transition less successful. "You may even modify the rollout plans based on the feedback uncovered during these conversations," Betz said.

For example, if a driver tells you that they live in an apartment building and don't want to take time out of their day to charge, it may trigger a more detailed review of which drivers' living environments are more conducive for home charging.



Dr. Alison Betz

Betz adds that the assessment phase is more than identifying potential issues. It is also an opportunity to build a foundation of excitement. Electric vehicles offer many upsides for drivers. They require less maintenance, are quick and more responsive, and can refuel

overnight while the driver sleeps. Charging at home in the employee's driveway or garage also saves the company money and the driver valuable time.

"Ask the drivers what they think the positives might be so they focus on those, too," Betz said. "But don't push your pro-EV agenda during this period. It is essential that the assessment time is one of listening and not talking at the person or group."

In other words, the assessment phase is not the time to share your company's reasons for electrification or detailed solutions but merely a chance to gather information about the group's current attitudes and mindsets. If you discover any resistance to a full-scale launch, a pilot program is a great next step.

Enhancing Behavioral Change Through a Pilot Program

Betz stresses the value of pilot programs as a means to demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of EVs in a controlled setting. This hands-on experience is vital for changing perceptions and encouraging positive attitudes. A well-structured pilot program is an invaluable tool that can help your organization:

1. Reduce Anxiety and Build Confidence.

One of the primary benefits of a pilot program is its ability to reduce anxiety and build user confidence. "By allowing drivers to experience EVs firsthand, in a supportive environment, the program can demystify EV technology and dispel myths, aligning with the concept of experiential learning," Betz said.

2. Leverage Social Proof. Behavioral psychology emphasizes the importance of social proof in influencing behavior. A successful pilot program creates ambassadors for the EV initiative within the organization. "As drivers share their positive experiences with peers, this peer influence can be a powerful motivator for others, encouraging a more widespread acceptance of the change," Betz said. For this reason, she adds, having actual end-users, rather than managers or executives, in the pilot is essential. "This approach ensures that the feedback is relevant and grounded in the day-to-day realities of the drivers' work and enhances the perceived credibility of the reports."

3. Get valuable data. The pilot is also an essential tool for gathering data about job-use fit and vehicle performance. “Piloting the use of EVs in a specific region or department allows an organization to identify and address operational challenges before a full-scale rollout,” Betz said. “This could involve logistics related to charging infrastructure, adjustments in route planning to accommodate charging times, or understanding how EVs handle under different weather conditions.” Data from a pilot program can inform the scalability of the EV transition. It can help an organization understand what resources are needed for a broader rollout, including investments in charging infrastructure, vehicle procurement, and support services.

4. Identify training needs. “Behavior modification often requires some form of education or training,” Betz said. “The pilot program can reveal what training or support drivers need to transition smoothly to using EVs.” This might include understanding how to optimize battery use, familiarity with charging infrastructure or adapting driving habits for EV efficiency.

Post-Pilot Behavioral Reinforcement

The final part of Betz’s framework is the “consequences” section. Here, the objective is to understand and manage the outcomes of behaviors to encourage desirable actions and discourage undesirable ones within an organizational setting.

In addition to addressing any issues teased out during the assessment and pilot phases, you can improve the success of your rollout by rewarding drivers and teams that effectively adopt and advocate for the EV transition. “This could involve recognition programs, incentives for efficient EV use, or awards for ambassadors of the EV initiative,” Betz said.

It is also important to share the outcomes, successes, and lessons learned from the pilot and subsequent rollout with the broader organization to strengthen the social interest in the program’s success. “Highlighting positive stories and data can reinforce the benefits of the EV transition and encourage ongoing support and enthusiasm,” Betz said.

Conclusion

Organizations can navigate the challenges of transitioning to EVs by prioritizing communication, understanding, and involvement. Betz’s insights underline the need for a strategy that acknowledges the human element of such transitions, ensuring that drivers feel heard, supported, and part of the change rather than merely subjects of it.

Moreover, Betz stresses the value of pilot programs as a means to demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of EVs in a controlled setting. Such programs allow drivers to experience EVs firsthand, alleviating anxieties and dispelling myths. This hands-on experience is vital for changing perceptions and encouraging positive attitudes toward EVs. Savvy fleet managers should take note.

About the Author: Kate L. Harrison is the co-founder of MoveEV, an AI-powered EV transition platform that helps organizations convert fleet and employee-owned gas vehicles to electric and reimburse for charging at home. With more than a decade of experience as a serial entrepreneur and seasoned marketer, Kate has worked with small businesses, nonprofits, and government organizations to make the world a better place. She is a best-selling author, thought leader, and frequent speaker at conferences and events, sharing her insights and experiences with others who are working to create a more sustainable future.

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