Less-than-truckload carrier Dohrn Transfer Company utilizes Samsara to support ELD compliance, routing and dispatch efficiency, safety programs, and preventive maintenance for its 545-vehicle fleet.

Headquartered in Rock Island, Illinois, Dohrn Transfer traces its roots back to 1921, when Charles Dohrn started the company with one wood slatted truck and a single route. Today Dohrn has 21 terminals and offers trucking services and local delivery throughout a 14-state service area. With 470 tractors, 75 straight trucks, and 645 drivers, Dohrn prides itself on utilizing powerful logistical tools and showcasing excellence in service.

Dohrn Transfer is subject to Hours of Service regulations and needed to find a solution for ELD compliance. But beyond compliance, Dohrn leadership wanted the new technology to support broader business initiatives.

When the Dohrn team evaluated Samsara, they immediately recognized the value of the integrated fleet platform, including sensor data reporting live GPS, maintenance diagnostics, fuel usage, and driver safety events. “With Samsara we quickly saw a ton of additional operational benefits in terms of..."
The Samsara solution is so great for us—it’s not only improving our operating efficiency and saving us money, but also deeply engaging our employees in improving safety,” said Michael Leathers, VP of Administration at Dohrn.

But there was something Leathers was looking for that made his decision even simpler: ease of use and employee engagement—two criteria Leathers prioritizes in any new technology—were apparent in the Samsara platform.

“Samsara is hands down more flexible and user-friendly than other solutions we tried,” Leathers said. “It was so much simpler to implement and to integrate with other parts of our business, and for drivers to get up to speed.”

The Dohrn team could picture Samsara at the heart of the organization, helping the company improve safety, reduce hours spent on paperwork, optimize maintenance, and enhance dispatching efficiency. With that vision in mind, Dohrn deployed Samsara IoT sensors in every Dohrn truck.
Faster Dispatch and Routing for On-Time Service

Dohrn handles local pickup and last-mile delivery alongside their terminal-to-terminal routes, and dispatch administration has significantly improved since deploying Samsara. As customers make requests throughout the day via web forms and calls, Dohrn dispatchers are responsible for assigning drivers to meet every appointment.

Before Samsara, the team had to estimate when drivers might return for their next load, or they had to call drivers directly. Now the team relies on Samsara’s live-to-the-second GPS location tracking and can easily search by truck number to make better real-time decisions about who to send where and how to plan the day.

The Samsara dashboard shows the team exactly where every driver is and whether they’ve just arrived at a delivery or are taking longer than usual at a particular site.

“It’s helpful to see where a driver is delayed, so we can send a different driver out for a new assignment,” said Ryan Pitzer, Terminal Dispatch Manager. “More knowledge creates efficiency, and with less guessing about timelines, we can get more done in a day.”

Enhanced Safety Through Driver Coaching and Gamification

“Since we started working with Samsara, we have a clearer, more holistic view of safety,” said COO Robert Howard. “We have more data. We’re able to give feedback to our drivers faster and more accurately. We use that information to make better decisions and to show how much safety is improving at Dohrn.”

Dohrn’s partnership with Samsara has transformed their safety program. Previously, they only coached drivers if they received a ticket or were involved in an accident.
But now, the team has the driving data and associated dash cam footage to be able to coach drivers proactively. The company invested in dash cams for the first time in its history, and Dohrn's new proactive safety coaching program focuses heavily on employee engagement.

“Samsara allows us to gauge the type of coaching and additional training that we can supply the employee to make them successful and a good, professional driver,” said Troy Winthurst, Director of Safety.

In one year, Dohrn achieved an 88% decrease in harsh driving events—harsh braking, acceleration, turning, and more. The team cites driver buy-in and feedback as the most important factors in their success. Managers use Samsara HD dash cam footage and incident graphs to understand each harsh driving event. Then they make a determination on what kind of method should be used to best help drivers in their professional development: verbal coaching, video review, or even hands-on coaching depending on the driver’s previous performance or frequency of harsh driving events. The team makes sure that drivers are coached within 24 hours of a harsh event so that drivers receive feedback as quickly as possible.

“Coaching has been positive thus far. A lot of times they’re calling giving us an explanation as to why that event occurred prior to us talking to them,” said Winthurst.

“They are really in front of it and engaged in the system.”

Beyond coaching individual harsh driving events, Dohrn started to use Samsara driver safety scores to evaluate overall safety performance by driver, allowing the team to pinpoint risky drivers and reward high performers. Before rolling out Samsara safety scores, Winthurst made sure to inform his drivers how safety scores are calculated so they know how their driving behavior would impact their safety ranking.

To create transparency and help keep safety scores top of mind, Dohrn started off by posting driver safety scores in the dispatch offices and driver break rooms of each terminal. While the scores were anonymous and only identifiable by employee ID, the team soon saw that their drivers started a friendly competition to see who could achieve the highest safety score on the terminal level and also companywide. The next month, Winthurst turned on the gamification feature in the Driver app so drivers could see their safety score and ranking every day.

As part of the proactive coaching program, the safety team meets with all drivers with a monthly safety score below 90. They coach on driving behavior made visible by Samsara data such as hours over speed. This approach helps drivers understand what behaviors they can change to drive more safely and improve their safety score as a result.
Building on their proactive coaching program, Dohrn started a new safety award program based on Samsara safety scores to further engage their drivers on safe driving. The top line-haul and city drivers with the best Samsara safety score in the company overall and the top two drivers at each terminal receive awards from Dohrn executives for their commitment to safe driving. The team is creating a safety recognition wall at their headquarters for all Top Samsara Safety Score award recipients to honor their achievement.

Increased coaching, recognition, and driver engagement has yielded positive results for Dohrn. “The more we engage our drivers and give them the tools to make their jobs easier, the more they are engaged in having safe behavior. We’ve definitely seen our retention improve,” said Howard.

In the last year, the company saw a 10% reduction in driver turnover, saving $8,000 in recruitment and replacement costs per driver.

Leveraging Automation for Proactive Maintenance

Sandra Rose-Brown, Director of Maintenance across all eight of Dohrn’s maintenance shops, also has safety top of mind. “Maintenance is all about safety, that’s our top priority,” she said.

Drivers never wanted to send their trucks to the shop and often there was no follow up on paper logs of unsafe vehicles until it was too late. Rose-Brown recalls walking in to check on her lead technician in the morning and seeing a table of paper vehicle inspection reports with
corresponding keys. "He’s literally got 45 pieces of paper in front of him with a set of keys on each one," she said. It was difficult to prioritize maintenance issues logged on paper, conduct the necessary service, and sign off on each one to make sure everything was completed.

“Samsara provides us with a higher level of visibility, and there’s less human error,” she said. When unsafe DVIRs are submitted, terminal managers now receive automatic alerts and know to coordinate with the maintenance team for repairs.

“Before we had Samsara, we would have to rely on the next driver not taking out a piece of equipment that was marked unsafe,” said Rose-Brown. "The immediate notification has been a crucial piece when we have an unsafe DVIR that helps us get a jump on it and keep the truck running."

Dohrn has been able to achieve a 40% quicker response on maintenance issues, helping manage vehicle uptime and ensuring that drivers aren't taking unsafe vehicles out on the road.

Samsara's electronic DVIRs also allow the team to take care of preventative maintenance issues that don't necessarily affect the operation of the vehicle — like a radio that’s on the fritz or a dysfunctional passenger side window.

“The visibility and organization we have with Samsara really helps us manage our maintenance needs down to the smallest thing,” said Rose-Brown.

When a check engine light comes on, her team has the ability to see remotely what’s going on with live engine diagnostics and alerts. They are even able to find patterns in vehicle performance over time based on the robust data in their Samsara dashboard, anticipating potential issues and taking steps to prevent breakdowns before they happen.
Improved Operational Efficiency and Cost Savings

Dohrn is seeing Samsara’s impact across all parts of the business, from up-to-the-section dispatch to improved maintenance response to enhanced customer service.

“Samsara has been a great help in bringing our departments closer together,” said Alex Gustafson, Director of Information Systems at Dohrn. “Before it was very siloed. Now, Samsara gives us a platform where we can all work together and be more efficient.”

Since partnering with Samsara, the team has seen these efficiencies translate into savings that enable them to reinvest resources into other areas of the business, including employee engagement and driver retention.

• 50% reduction in idling after seeing idling reports in the Samsara dashboard and implementing a coaching program to cut idling time by half.

• 2% increase in fuel efficiency across the fleet, which translates to 150,000 gallons of fuel saved and over $500,000 in savings per year.

• $200,000 annual savings on cellular data plans by relying on Samsara’s built-in WiFi hotspot to connect the tablets used to process pickups and deliveries.

• 20 hours saved per week in administrative overhead by automating HOS log processing.

• 2 days saved per week in administrative overhead plus additional hours auditing and assembling reports, by automating IFTA reporting.
True to Dohrn’s original vision, Samsara is now a business-critical solution for the Dispatch, Safety, and Maintenance teams. Michael Leathers remains focused on using Samsara to improve quality across all parts of the Dohrn business.

“The Samsara solution is so great for us—it’s not only improving our operating efficiency and saving us money, but also deeply engaging our employees in improving safety,” he said. “We wanted to have a technology partner that would adapt to how we run our business. That’s what we found in Samsara.”

Find out how the Samsara platform can help your organization. Email us at sales@samsara.com.

SANDRA ROSE-BROWN
Director of Maintenance,
Dohrn Transfer Company

“The visibility and organization we have with Samsara really helps us manage our maintenance needs down to the smallest thing.”