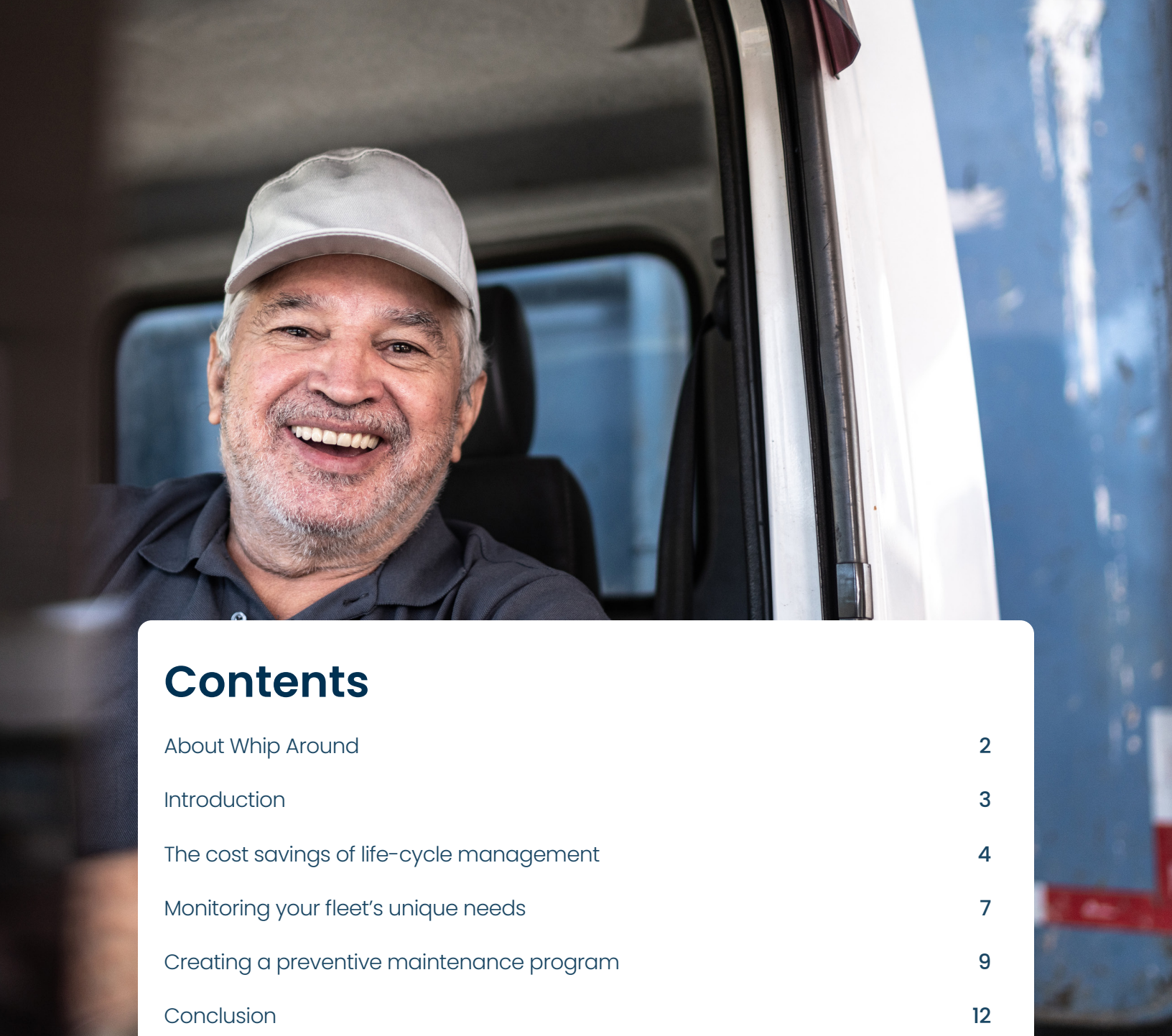




# Prolonging the life of your fleet

Creating a preventive maintenance program  
that works.





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## About Whip Around

Whip Around is a fleet maintenance platform helping fleet managers, drivers, and mechanics keep their fleets running smoothly and safely. With Whip Around's DOT-compliant software, you can efficiently manage vehicle and asset inspections,

create and track work orders, automatically schedule preventive maintenance, and reference detailed fleet and asset data in real time.

Visit our website to learn more: [whiparound.com](https://www.whiparound.com)





## Introduction

As a fleet manager, you strive to maximize your fleet's productivity while protecting the company's profitability. That requires managing the total cost of ownership across all of your fleet assets while optimizing your operating costs.

In the current economic climate, businesses in many industries have experienced the challenges of shrinking profit margins. For many companies, fleet managers are responsible for the area that makes up the majority of their company's operating budget, so it's more critical than ever

to focus on increasing the life cycle of your equipment while minimizing operational costs wherever possible.

In this ebook, we'll examine the importance of increasing the lifespan of your equipment, explore the role preventive maintenance plays, discuss some of its challenges, and offer suggestions for creating a preventive maintenance program that works. We'll also show you how [Whip Around](#) can simplify the entire process.

# The cost savings of life-cycle management

Every piece of equipment has a maximum potential lifespan. If assets are abused or neglected, that life cycle will be shortened. But with proper care and attention, they can meet (and often exceed) their projected lifespan.

This seems obvious, but it requires recognizing the up-front costs associated with prolonging your fleet's life. Company leadership might agree on the value of routine maintenance and proactive asset management and still be wary about making the investments required up front—which can appear unnecessarily costly. The “if it ain't broke, why fix it” mindset can rear its head when companies start looking at the costs associated with keeping things running smoothly.

The key is recognizing that the minor up-front payout wards off the exorbitant costs of repairing and replacing ill-maintained equipment. For example, investing the mechanic hours and \$80 to change a serpentine belt during a routine oil change can save you from spending \$800 for a new alternator. But the cost difference between parts is not the only way you save with preventive maintenance. You save on towing costs, unplanned downtime, missed deadlines, and in the worst cases, fallout from accidents.

Preventive maintenance certainly has its costs, but they're much easier to plan for than breakdowns. A company can budget for preventive care much easier than it can budget for reactive care.





# Where life-cycle management saves money

The obvious benefit of prolonging your equipment life is that you get more value from the asset. Preventive maintenance can allow you to use a piece of equipment for a longer period of time, or command a higher price on the secondary market when you replace it.

But the value associated with prolonging your fleet's life goes beyond the value of the equipment itself. The cost savings applies to things like:

## Decreased unplanned downtime

Managing downtime is a lot like managing a budget. It's coming one way or another; you can proactively plan for it or just hope to navigate it with as little interruption as possible. Budgeting for downtime as part of a preventive maintenance program means you're not suddenly scrambling to figure out how you'll get through the day without that vehicle or equipment.

And the downtime for reactive maintenance is typically much longer than it is for scheduled maintenance.

The goal is to save yourself the hassle of fielding phone calls from the road where a vehicle has broken down and now needs to be towed to a shop in an unfamiliar town for repairs. Not only does unplanned downtime impact productivity, but it potentially means excessive repair or replacement costs.





## Increased operational efficiency

Operational efficiency is the ability to reduce wasted time, effort, and materials while delivering a product or service. The greater your operational efficiency, the more profitable your company can be.

Reactive maintenance means waiting for a mechanic to make room for you or bumping other necessary but less-urgent tasks aside. It means paying to rush essential replacement parts. It means lost productivity. This brings down your organization's efficiency.

However, preventive maintenance streamlines processes. It reduces unplanned maintenance time and it gives your entire organization a chance to strategically plan maintenance operations (including staffing). This makes your entire organization more efficient, and therefore, more profitable.

## Improved customer satisfaction and brand trust

Keeping your equipment in peak condition enables consistent performance, which makes it easier to set expectations for your customers (and meet them). But preventive maintenance impacts potential customer experiences with your company in ways you might never expect.

Consider the ways reactive maintenance issues can impact your brand. Late deliveries can lead customers to seek alternative vendors. Damaged or spoiled products can damage and spoil relationships. And no client wants to see their vendor's brand name proudly displayed on the trailer of a broken-down truck on the side of the road.



# Monitoring your fleet's unique needs

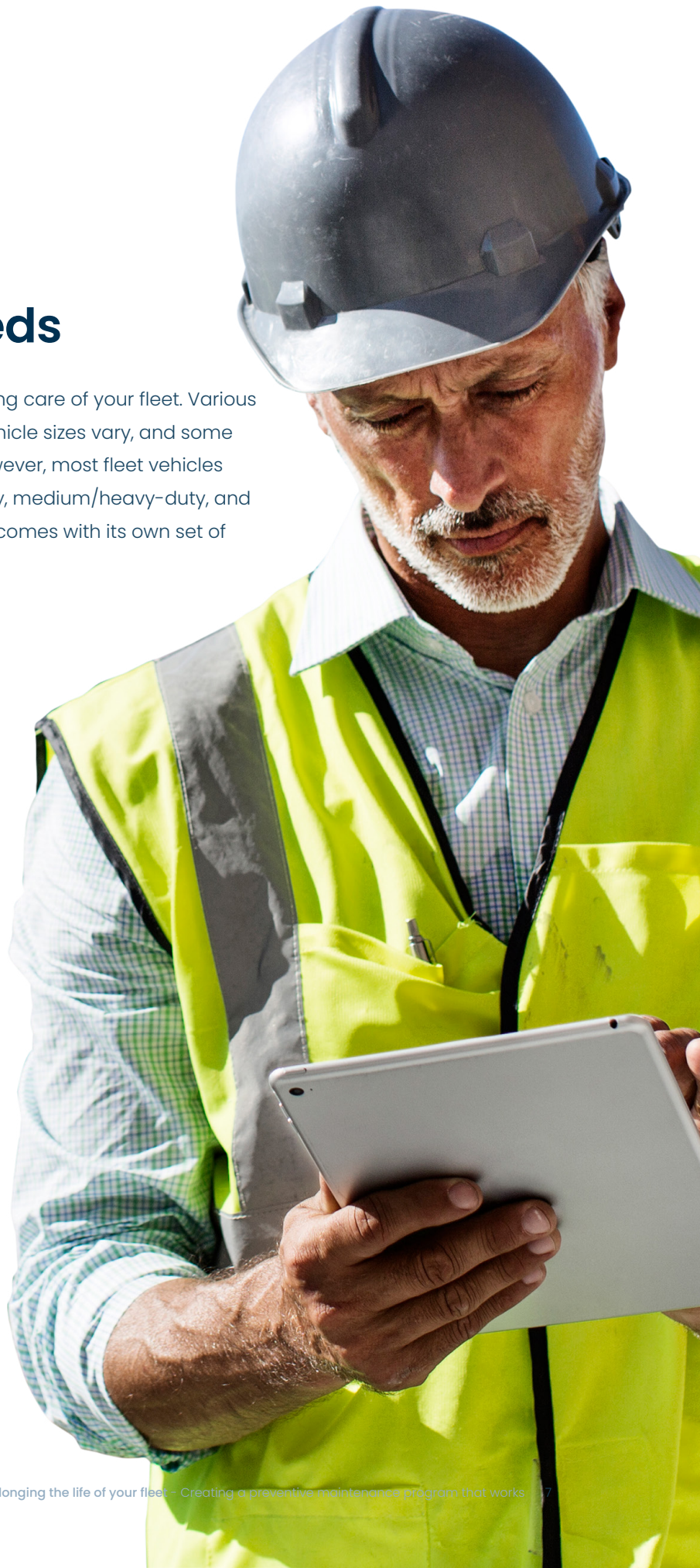
There isn't a one-size-fits-all strategy for taking care of your fleet. Various industries have unique equipment needs. Vehicle sizes vary, and some industries rely on specialized equipment. However, most fleet vehicles will fall into one of three categories: light-duty, medium/heavy-duty, and specialized/upfitted vehicles. Each category comes with its own set of common maintenance considerations.

## Light-duty vehicles

You might shuttle passengers to the airport, offer same-day package deliveries, or run a landscaping business. If you're running class 1 or class 2 commercial vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 10,000 pounds or less, you're managing light-duty vehicles.

Quite often, fleets with smaller vehicles do a lot of inner-city and suburban driving, which involves a great deal of time idling with a foot on the brake pedal. This daily wear and tear builds up substantially over time.

Most of us are familiar with light-duty-sized vehicles, so it's easy to think of pre-trip inspections for smaller vehicles as obligatory but largely unnecessary. The truth is that these kinds of vehicles might require more scrutiny during inspections, not less—particularly under the hood.



As these vehicles sit in traffic every day, their engine idles at low RPMs, reducing the oil pressure and putting wear on engine parts. Oil may need to be changed more frequently, and brake pads and tires need regular attention.

## Medium- and heavy-duty vehicles

Organizations focused on high-volume deliveries and logistics might rely more on medium- and heavy-duty rigs. These are class 3–8 commercial vehicles with a GVWR above 10,001 pounds. (Other criteria may classify a vehicle as heavy-duty, too.) Most vehicles at this level become subject to Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations. That means regular inspections, DVIRs, and detailed inspection and maintenance records.

Medium- and heavy-duty vehicles put on a lot of highway miles, which are easier on the rig than suburban and inner-city miles. But their sheer size makes them a potential hazard if they're not impeccably taken care of. So not only does a vigilant inspection and repair process save money on future repairs, but it also saves on the repercussions of accidents related to equipment failure.

Accidents, and especially accidents involving injuries or fatalities, can bury a company in legal fees, damages, and stigma following tragedy.

## Specialized and upfitted vehicles

Many organizations' fleets consist of specialized vehicles accessorized or augmented to meet a custom need. Examples include garbage trucks, cranes, and utility trucks.

Specialized assets are expensive, unique, and difficult to replace. A single breakdown can easily throw a project or contract off schedule. And just like the asset is specialized, it can take help from a specialized mechanic to address repairs.

This means your plan to monitor these assets should involve customized inspection forms that include elements not mentioned in the generic variety. The right forms can make all the difference, allowing your drivers to quickly recognize problems with things like winches, shelving, cooling systems, ladder racks, etc.

Preventive maintenance certainly has its costs, but they're much easier to plan for than breakdowns. A company can budget for preventive care much easier than it can budget for reactive care.



# Creating a preventive maintenance program

You can't just flip a switch and create a high-functioning preventive maintenance program. It takes some ramping up and initial investments into the process. If you try to create a preventive maintenance program featuring every asset and piece of equipment your company owns, you might end up overwhelmed or drawing the attention of company leaders who don't understand why you're paying to repair equipment that's not broken.

## Decide where to start

If you manage the fleet of a small or mid-sized business, it may make sense to create a program that includes all your assets. A larger company or a fleet that has many different kinds of equipment and vehicles might require breaking this process into stages.

Deciding where to start requires asking yourself questions like:

- Which assets directly impact our ability to deliver on our daily output?
- Which assets can we least afford unscheduled downtime on?
- Which assets have the more significant gap between the cost of preventive maintenance and the cost of repair?

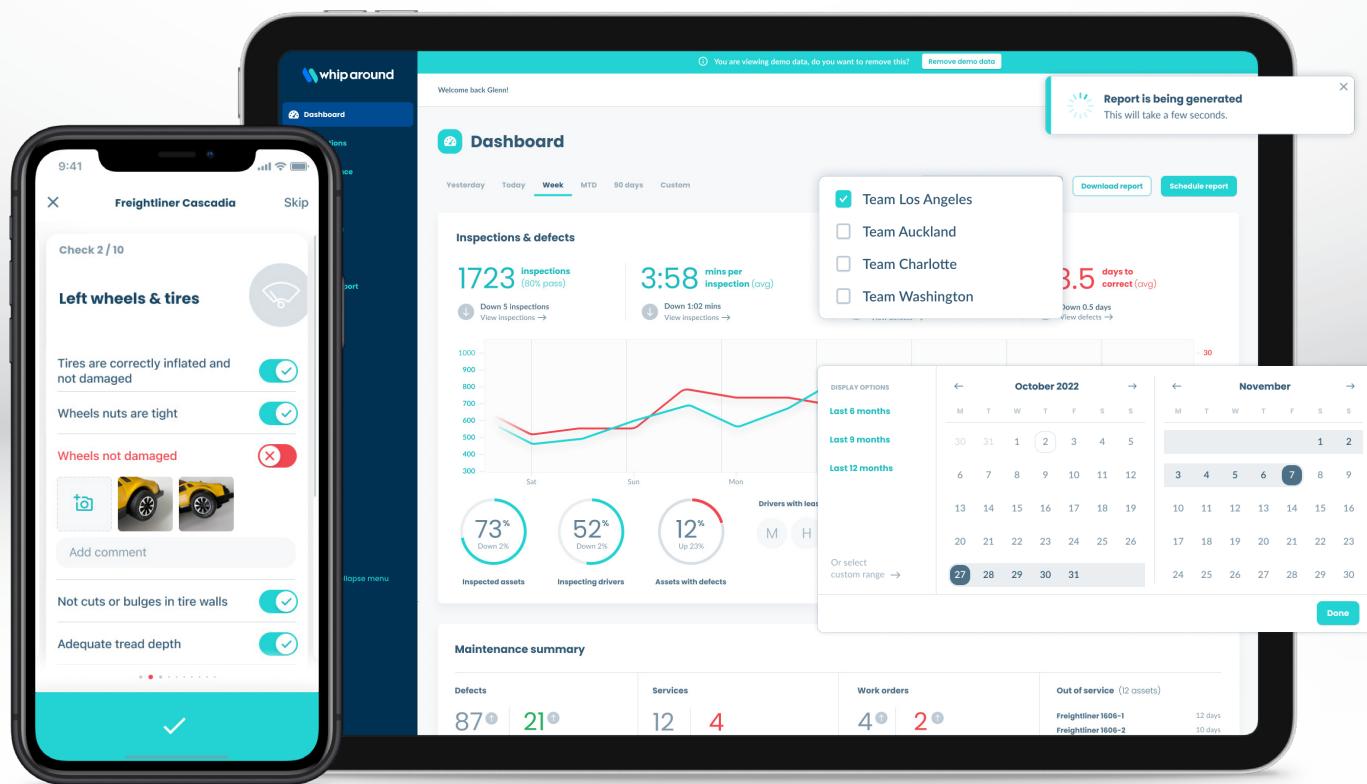
These questions will help you know where to focus your energies first. As your capacity for preventive maintenance increases, you can include more assets in your plan.

## Create a maintenance schedule

Eventually, every asset in your fleet should have its own maintenance schedule based on how it's used. If you're not sure where to start, the manufacturer's recommendations can help set a baseline. So pay attention to the materials provided with new equipment and parts.

Keep in mind that the manufacturer's guidelines might not take into account the way you're using the vehicle. For example, if you work for an HVAC repair company and operate light-duty trucks in extreme temperatures every day, the standard recommendations may not be frequent enough. Likewise, if seasonality affects your fleet usage, you may need to use a different maintenance schedule for peak months.

Over time, you can see trends in various equipment and cater to their maintenance needs accordingly. This saves you the problem of wasting preventive maintenance dollars on unnecessary upkeep, but it also helps you ensure that maintenance is scheduled right on time. Obviously, you don't want to replace parts too late, but doing



it too early isn't ideal either. Regular assessments of your fleet's performance and health over time will help you dial in the proper schedule for each asset.

## Automate your service workflow

Maintaining a preventive maintenance program is easier than it's ever been. The ability to digitally automate the process and receive updates when it's time to schedule work is a game changer.

The goal of a preventive maintenance program isn't to create a plan; it's to execute the plan. It's not helpful if the information is in a spreadsheet or a log book waiting for someone to notice it. By automating the process, you can stay on schedule and actually get the work done.

Whip Around allows you to set up a service schedule for each piece of equipment. You can set the reminder to occur at the interval you choose. Get an automated update when a service is due based on the distance driven, hours of operation, or the amount of time since the last service. You can set the reminders to give you enough room to schedule around the equipment's downtime.

When a service reminder comes in, you can instantly create a work order for in-house or external mechanics.



## Get your whole team on board

Preventive maintenance isn't something a fleet manager can sustain on their own. It requires a team effort. You need to [create a culture](#) that values equipment life, takes equipment inspections seriously, and makes this maintenance a shared norm and expectation.

Inspections can't simply be seen as a federal obligation, but as a daily opportunity to catch minor issues before they become big problems. Not only does this prolong your equipment's lifespan, but it makes the roads safer, too. Drivers are your front-line defense against problems that can lead to game-stopping breakdowns or hazardous accidents.

Training should extend to regular refreshers on driving best practices. A big factor in the life of a vehicle has to do with how it's driven. So it's helpful to talk through some of the driving habits that have a negative impact on vehicles: fast acceleration, hard braking, excessive idling, improperly warming the vehicle, etc.

The customizable inspection reports in Whip Around can even protect against pencil whipping (filling out inspection forms without thoroughly completing the inspection process). Drivers complete inspections on their mobile device, and you can include sections requiring photos, which help ensure that they're out of the cab and actually doing a 360° inspection.

## Keep meticulous records

Any preventive maintenance program worth its salt requires a plan for documenting and following up on problems. It also requires a document-storage plan, so you can see at a moment's notice everything that has been done on a vehicle. If a driver documents a fault or potential issue, you need to ensure that it's addressed as quickly as possible—and you need a way to record when that repair takes place. This will help you monitor trends and ensure that you're the first one to know if a piece of equipment costs too much to keep in the fleet. Plus, when you need to provide maintenance records for compliance, it's easy to quickly demonstrate that you've been maintaining your fleet responsibly.

On top of that, you'll need up-to-the-minute info on the parts you have on hand. It's not very helpful to schedule maintenance on time, and then realize that you'll have to order the needed parts. This can cost you hours or even days of downtime.

Managing your maintenance documentation is far more efficiently done with a digital solution like Whip Around (as opposed to paper forms). Information is stored in the cloud, so a detailed inspection and service history breakdown is available and easily accessible for every asset in your fleet. You can track work orders, parts and labor costs for each vehicle, and parts inventory in your shop. And it's all accessible through a user-friendly, intuitive dashboard.

## Conclusion

If done wisely and strategically, fleet managers can create a preventive maintenance program that keeps everything running smoothly, saves the company money, and makes them look like heroes.

Taking advantage of the tools that will make the job easier is a big part of the task. A resource like Whip Around can make all the difference. Driver inspections become easier. Repair workflows become smoother. And you'll have all the information needed to monitor trends and fine-tune the process.

Schedule a free demo if you're interested in discovering how Whip Around can help get your preventive maintenance program off the ground—and keep it productive.

We'll be there during the onboarding process to ensure you get the most out of our fleet maintenance tool.

See Whip Around in action.

[START FREE TRIAL](#)

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