



Three Rights Make a Left: How UPS Uses Responsible Speed to Save Time and Money

You have heard of the old adage that two wrongs don't make a right. Well, I have a new one for you: three rights do make a left. When you are driving, making three right turns is, in fact, the equivalent of making a left turn. Why is this relevant? How does this relate to business?

United Parcel Service has turned this into an art form. UPS actually trains their drivers to make right turns instead of left turns when making deliveries in large urban centres. Why? Typically, you do not need to wait when making a right turn, as opposed to idling in the middle of an intersection, waiting for an advanced left turn light, or for traffic to subside enough to let you make the left turn. According to research that UPS conducted, waiting to make a left turn is not only more dangerous but it is also less fuel-efficient. Not only is there the danger of veering into oncoming traffic to make the left turn, but drivers may also wait 20-30 seconds (or longer) to make the turn.

Fuel efficiency in a car or truck is at its worst when it is sitting idle, for obvious reasons—the car is on, using up energy, but not moving anywhere. Sitting in an intersection waiting to make a turn uses up fuel as well as time. This does not sound like a big deal for the average driver, but when you have a company with 88,000 trucks making 15 million deliveries each day, the time and cost savings represent a significant value.

I have discussed the concept of responsible speed in previous articles, as well as my new booklet, *The Speed Principles*. Responsible speed is when companies know when to speed up, when to slow down and have the ability to control their own speed. This UPS example epitomizes the point perfectly. UPS was not looking for the fastest solution; they were looking for the smartest solution. Making three rights lowers vehicle idling time, reduces fuel consumption and increases driver safety. Obviously, there are some limitations to UPS's policy; such as it is only beneficial in urban centres with a lot of traffic and many alternate routes. The intent is not to double travel time or take drivers out of their way, but in compact cities like New York, this policy saves time and money, not to mention increases the safety of the drivers.

This is a creative way that a company has used the concept of 'responsible speed' to create a business advantage. The next time you are driving, try this experiment—if you need to make a left turn, try making three rights. Then go back and make the left turn and see if there is a difference. I welcome your comments based on the outcome.