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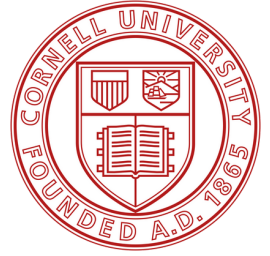
# An Interview with Cornell University's Sally Compton



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# An Insider's Look at Cornell University's Fleet

Fleet expert and Certified Automotive Fleet Manager (CAFM) Sally Compton has worked for more than five years with Cornell Fleet Services. The organization currently manages five motor pool locations and maintains a fleet of 250 vehicles, with an additional 650 vehicles under their supervision.



Q

**Give us a brief history of your career in fleet, how and why you became a CAFM, and how it's helped you in your career.**

A

I have been with Cornell Fleet Services for over five years. I started as an Administrative Assistant, quickly moved to Office Manager and am currently a Fleet Operations Coordinator. I was with Fleet for about a year when I was approached about the CAFM certification. Looking at it as an opportunity to grow and expand my horizons, I jumped at the chance. I attended the CAFM Bootcamp in October 2012, which turned out to be invaluable. Not only did I learn a lot, but I met people there that turned out to be a wonderful support system and with whom I am still in contact with today. I received my final grades and confirmation of my CAFM at 5pm on December 24, 2013, making me the first CAFM at Cornell University. The curriculum is so broad that I use some of it daily in support of our operation.



**Sally Compton, CAFM**  
**Cornell University Automotive**  
**Fleet Manager**

Q

**What were the top 3 challenges Cornell faced prior to automating?**

A

Our top challenges were:

- Meeting after hours & weekend customer demand for picking up vehicles
- Facilitating returns outside normal business hours
- Streamlining data collection and reporting capabilities



**Q** Briefly describe how the fleet was managed prior to FleetCommander.

**A** A mainframe program that required a lot of paper logs was previously used. Vehicles were manually dispatched in and out, and the keys were handed to the customers by staff.

**Q** Tell us about the Cornell University fleet and motor pool operations.

**A** We have five sites running on FleetCommander sharing 250 vehicles, and 650 other vehicles being tracked. Our main site, Cornell, contains our rental fleet. We currently have about 50 vehicles (sedans/vans/pickups) that are in our daily/monthly fleet. We also have about 115 vehicles in our annual fleet that are spread out across New York State, but we own and maintain them, as well as track maintenance and repairs performed at remote providers.

There are also 5 vehicles at our division headquarters that can be used for up to a maximum of 4 hours at a time. These are used mostly for meetings on and around campus. Recently, we acquired about 110 vehicles used by our campus tradespeople, comprised of heating/electrical/plumbing personnel, and labeled as “shops.” These vehicles are used in support of the respective shops’ duties on campus. They are also leased annually, and we maintain them, as well as facilitate the purchase and replacement schedule. Cornell 2 contains our Campus to Campus (Ithaca to NYC) bus fleet.

FleetCommander is used to track maintenance, DOT record keeping information, etc. on these vehicles. We also have a site called Departments, which contains about 650 vehicles. These vehicles are owned by various departments on campus and are not centralized. We track and perform maintenance on some, but not all these vehicles. Our Geneva NY satellite campus uses the system as well. They have 25 vehicles that are used on daily/monthly basis. Maintenance is performed at their location. The Plantations department here on our campus is just starting to enter their vehicles into the system to track maintenance, etc. These include trucks/tractors/lawn mowers/etc. They also have their own maintenance staff.





## **What is unique about the university environment that fleet and motor pool automation addresses?**



One of our biggest challenges is keeping our user profiles up to date. We spend a lot of time trying to keep up with the changes. If the profiles were not online in FleetCommander, managing paper profiles would be a nightmare. In a university setting, staff tend to move from one department to another. They are responsible for keeping their profile up to date with this information, which tends to get overlooked. This presents all sorts of issues from accounting to supervisor approval. Often, students come back to Cornell to pursue more education or as staff, which means their information needs to be updated again.

One way we can handle this via FleetCommander is by requiring a profile update. There is a feature that will pop up a reminder for the user to update his or her profile. Every time the user logs in, they will see it until they click on "Save" in their profile. Agile could interface with our HR application, automatically sending user data to FleetCommander which will automatically update the information in the profiles, delete users no longer there, and add users who are new. We are currently considering this option.

We are self-insured so only Cornell students/faculty and staff can drive and be passengers in our vehicles. Our vehicles can only be used for university business as it relates to their employment at Cornell. Usage groups in FleetCommander can help with this. Since non-Cornell people can be excluded from the user database to begin with, we can make sure no one outside of this group can make a reservation or be a driver.

Our Risk Management Office reviews all student drivers for eligibility, which sometimes creates an issue if the student needs a vehicle immediately. For example, in order to drive our "large vans," which hold 12 people and have space in the rear for cargo, but are longer/taller than the average van, our customers need to purchase an online access code, view a 2-hour online video, pass the accompanying test, and pass a ½ hour driving test with our staff before they are allowed access to those vehicles. Again, this creates issues if a vehicle is needed immediately. Automated FleetCommander notices and access groups help. Having the ability to modify the "Welcome Page" and put important policy and other messages has also proved to be invaluable to the people we serve. We used this when we changed our billing algorithms, changed our locations and to notify customers they could pick up vehicles 24/7 via the kiosk. We currently have the instructions on how to make a change request on our "Welcome Page." We also regularly use the email feature in FleetCommander to request information, get supervisor approvals, and communicate any changes we have made to the system.



**Q What was the biggest factor that led to 35% reduction in your fleet and how did you do it?**

**A** Previously there was a set number of vehicles in the fleet. Vehicles came out and others went in, but that number stayed the same regardless of utilization. Once we looked at actual utilization by vehicle class, we were able to determine what vehicles were needed. We were able to dissolve one vehicle class that was mainly used during a 2-week period in the summer. Those reservations were easily changed to another vehicle class, which met the needs of the customers.



**Q What is the best thing the drivers and you like about the automated system?**

**A** Our drivers like that the system is easy to use and the fact that they can make a reservation anytime and from anywhere, and that they can pick up keys 24/7. The auto-assign feature has got to be my top pick. Providing the driver has the correct access for the vehicle type they are requesting; they know immediately year/make/model/color/asset number/etc. of the vehicle they have been assigned. One of my predecessors physically looked at each reservation and manually assigned the vehicles. The day we activated this feature we had approximately 25 reservations that I did not have to manually look at it. The feature alone freed up so much of my time and the customers appreciate the instant confirmation.

**Q What improvements have you seen on the reporting end of fleet management?**

**A** Our first success was being able to look at utilization and clearly see what vehicles were being under used. Armed with this information, we can easily make decisions about the fleet. Right now, we are looking at the cancellation report to determine what vehicle types are being requested and the reasons for cancellations. This is important as we do not want to lose business because we don't have the correct number of vehicles in a particular class. We do not anticipate being able to meet 100% of our reservation requests 100% of the time. It's my understanding this is the sign of a right-sized fleet. We can use outside rentals to cost-effectively deal with high demand times. You don't want to go overboard and have every type of vehicle that someone could ever need. That's why it's smart to use outside car rental agencies for overflow or specialty vehicles.

