



Dealer Solutions

Growing Your Own Technicians In-House

When the economy was declining, this caused consumers to delay buying new cars and maintain older cars longer. At the same time, the technician labor pool was shrinking for a number of reasons. New technology such as onboard computers requires technicians with new higher skill levels. The prevailing stereotype of “grease monkey” discourages interest in the automotive field. Parents and school counselors did not recommend the field to secondary students. Many secondary automotive programs did not meet modern business requirements, and the equipment provided to the schools was outdated.

Look at the overall demographic shift here: you have 78-million baby boomers who started retiring in 2008 being replaced by Generation X, which is comprised of only 45-million workers. Basically, you have a lot of people retiring now and not enough people to fill the jobs they’re leaving. This is going to impact the profession at every level, from the repair technician on down to the parts-distribution level. For every 10 technicians retiring, only two are coming into the industry.

Consider this—“Grow Your Own”. During my travels, I have seen great success using this method. Typically, technicians that grow up in a dealership are your most loyal and longest lasting employees. If you need a new line or “B” level technician, they can be hard to find. So maybe you can look at it this way... can your technically-inclined and dependable porter become your new ‘D’ tech and your current “D” tech become your new “C” tech, while your “C” tech becomes your newest “B” tech? Now we only have to find another good porter, not a “B” technician with five-plus years’ experience that we might even have to over-pay just to land. Seeing the ripple effect of opportunities within the store is always good for morale. Learn to look at people’s skill sets, and personality traits, not just what position they have worked in before.

You can use your own process, but here is just a short example.

- Offer the employee the opportunity to enroll in an accredited tech school and pay for part of his tuition or tools needed.
- Start the employee as a lube tech. Have him work together with an experienced lube tech for some time, then have him go solo.
- Monitor his or her progress and have regular meetings to discuss their progress.
- After they have mastered changing oil and rotating tires, have them perform more complex maintenance repairs such as fluid exchanges.
- Have the employee work with a master tech as an apprentice and compensate the master tech in some way.
- During the time with the master tech have them complete factory certifications.
- After consulting and managing the employee’s progress, you can determine the time they can start on the line independently.

Another benefit is that once the new hires see they have opportunities to grow with the company and move up the ladder, they will be more likely to put their hearts into their work. Friends of these

quality people who are stuck in hourly jobs with no future will start coming to you looking for careers. The word will get around that you are “the place to work.”

People like working for companies that look inside before looking outside. They start seeing a career, not just a job, and that makes hiring easier.