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Preventative Maintenance Pays Measurable Dividends

What are you doing to push the preventive maintenance message to your customers? The automotive industry and your customers need your expertise. You have nothing to lose, and dividends to gain!

by Rich Diegle

Every vehicle that enters your service bays represents an opportunity to better serve your customers with comprehensive vehicle inspections and recommendations for necessary component replacement. The amount of effort you expend promoting and providing regular vehicle maintenance may make the difference between having a solid database of loyal, lifetime customers or an endless stream of sporadic, one-time coupon shoppers.

A recent survey by the Car Care Council found that 54% of vehicles whose owners participated in voluntary vehicle inspections had low tire pressure; 38% had low or dirty engine oil; 28% had inadequate cooling protection; 19% needed new belts; 16% had dirty air filters; and 10% had low or contaminated brake fluid.

Does it surprise you to see such important components and systems listed? The reasons “why” these vehicle owners neglected such vital services may not surprise you. Here are a few samples of what they said:

- Don't have enough time to get the work done
- Didn't think it was necessary
- Not a high priority
- Didn't understand the cost of neglected problems
- Had no maintenance knowledge, or were misinformed
- If it's not broken, don't fix it.

It's obvious by these comments, that many vehicle owners are slow to realize that routine maintenance can promote fuel economy, vehicle longevity, safety, increased vehicle performance and more. As a professional vehicle repair shop, extend your expertise and promote preventive maintenance. Educate your customers on the value of regular maintenance and how it can save them money in the long term.

While your customers may complain about spending money on additional services in the wake of sky-rocketing gas prices, a focused marketing plan based on seasonal services can pay big dividends. Such programs can turn your customers' gas pains into a belief in the power of preventive maintenance and its positive impact on increased fuel economy, maximized horsepower and reduced emissions.

You may also shift their attention from dollars lost at the pump to the efficiencies gained by properly maintaining their vehicle – things like preventing major repairs, increased safety and maintaining a higher resale value.

By being proactive and involved you can get the message out to them. Here's how:

- Thoroughly inspect each customer's vehicle
- Hold seminars and car care clinics
- Run preventive maintenance specials
- Encourage customers to follow the preventive maintenance schedules in their owners' manuals
- Issue direct mail or email service reminders at mileage intervals
- Use in-shop signage and promotional materials
- List recommended services on invoices

Seasonal services can also help promote preventive maintenance year-round. Advertise and promote your shop's service offerings for key vehicle systems and components that require attention during related seasons. For instance, during the summer months create a service checklist that includes things like:

- Oil changes
- A/C system test
- Tire pressure check
- Cooling system maintenance
- Air filter replacement
- Fluid check
- Belt and hose inspection

In the winter, your checklist may include items such as:

- Windshield wiper inspection
- Oil change and fluid check
- Heating and defrosting system inspection
- Tire check
- Starting and charging system check
- Complete lamp inspection.

As each day unfolds, and the seasonal effects take their toll on critical vehicle systems, it brings with it new repair and service opportunities. The degree to which you boost customer awareness of the value of routine vehicle maintenance will be the extent to which your shop garners its share of these profitable, unperformed vehicle maintenance opportunities. What are you doing to push the preventive maintenance message to your customers? The automotive industry and your customers need your expertise. You have nothing to lose, and dividends to gain!