



Managing Learning to Improve Dealer Technician Performance

A customer's positive experience with a dealer's service department has a positive effect on the customer's brand loyalty, and a negative experience reduces brand loyalty.

Not only is a brand-loyal customer more likely to make repeat purchases, that customer can become a marketing asset through positive word of mouth.

Give dealership employees access to the knowledge they need to effectively service products and ensure customer satisfaction to promote loyalty. Service personnel must be familiar with a vehicle composed of complex assemblies, sub-assemblies and electronic systems, as well as the equipment and systems used to diagnose and service the vehicle. OEM certification programs, individualized training paths, compliance programs and professional certification accomplishments (ASE, CAP, AYES, NATEF, etc.) deliver the knowledge that maximizes success.

While the products in use today to manage these programs vary widely, the technology that supports multiple types of programs is the same. From a technology perspective, whether implementing a certification track, compliance program, technical core curriculum or job skill path, the basic structure and algorithm to support these programs is identical. In a dealer network, a common learning and certification system implemented by the OEM in a dealer portal allows the dealer to access a solution without incurring the software and hardware costs required to support the system.

Learning management systems (LMS) and e-learning can play a key role in reducing the costs and improving the outcomes of service department performance. Basic LMS features cost-effectively track employee skills sets and provide a system that centralizes training management, whether it is attending a seminar, on-site

training or online education courses. LMS administrators can build course catalogs, schedule course offerings, assign courses and manage many aspects of training delivery, including instructors, documents, facilities, equipment and online courses. Users can view the course catalog, enroll in and cancel out of course offerings, view their schedules, training transcripts, certification program progress, and launch e-learning courses. The advantages of an LMS include:

- Centralized and standardized training information and documentation, helping ensure that all dealers meet a consistent performance standard. Consistent performance reduces the chance that an undesirable customer experience at one dealer adversely affects another dealer.
- OEM Certification, ensuring that every service is performed by a qualified technician in the necessary skill areas.
- A reduction in disruptions to dealership operations, by delivering training in online, multimedia formats.
- Standard Web-based portal functionality, such as collaborative environments, automated workflow and notifications, data and information sharing.
- Real-time gap analysis capabilities for both managers and employees, tracking their progress toward various performance objectives at an individual, organizational or departmental level.

Depending on the LMS, employees and managers can add course offerings to an interest list. These courses can follow the requirements set forth in a predefined performance program, or other courses can be added to form unique learning objectives for each employee according to their needs. This type of arrangement saves time for both the training program administrators and the employees. If desired, managers can add their employees to interest lists once on a quarterly, annual or other routine basis. This will allow the LMS to auto-enroll employees

when training courses are offered and act as a localized course demand forecasting tool for instructors and other course providers.

Auto-enrollment capabilities also reduce the burden to the employee and manager by automatically alerting students by e-mail when they are enrolled in classes. The employee no longer needs to determine his or her learning needs, locate the appropriate courses and schedules and enroll in the class manually.

Another key function of an LMS is the ability to launch e-learning courses. An individual can access a course through a Web browser at any time, from any location that has Internet access. An e-learning course can range from a simple online slide presentation to a complex multimedia simulation, incorporating video, audio, online testing and other online interactivity.

Automotive technology is constantly evolving as are the training and certification programs used to provide technicians with the skills and knowledge to maintain that technology. The LMS used to guide technicians through the complex maze of certification requirements must be sufficiently flexible, scalable and intuitive. An ability to adjust to this highly dynamic landscape is what sets leading LMS systems apart from the competition.

By centralizing information and making it accessible to all stakeholders and by automating administrative processes, an LMS can help manufacturers and dealers more effectively manage service technician training. Organizations can maintain higher levels of customer service by using these intuitive systems for scheduling, managing and accessing the training they require.

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