5 Tips for Making Preventative Maintenance Work for Your Business

by Jason Goby & Adam Madsen, Karmak, Inc.
Having a preventative maintenance program in place at your shop can drive revenues and build trust with your customers. For those looking to go the extra mile, a preventative maintenance program can also give your shop an opportunity to be a leader in the industry.

In the latest issue of *Truck Parts and Service*, Lucas Deal covers the topic and speaks with a number of industry experts that all share in the opinion that an emphasis on preventative maintenance is a must for any shop.

If you’re ready to be proactive about your shop’s success, we have a few tips on getting the most out of your preventative maintenance program.

1. **Read meters accurately**

   Accurate meter readings are key to any preventative maintenance (PM) program. A meter reading entered incorrectly for a unit that is tracking PM can cost your shop valuable time. It can also cause you to make a call to a customer to schedule PM Service when in reality, the unit is far from needing service or far past due.

   Making sure that meters are read accurately is a small, simple piece of the bigger picture, but failing to do so can go a long way toward keeping a promising shop from ever reaching its potential.

2. **Use PM as a chance to upsell**

   You should upsell to take care of customers, not to take advantage of customers. The concept of upselling has a bad name in the industry due to overzealous shops recommending work that doesn’t need to be done. This has caused many shops and service writers to shy away from using PM work as an opportunity to upsell.

   But that’s a mistake. Any fleet manager or owner/operator would appreciate a sharp eye catching a repair that would have caused down time or a violation at the next weight station. These types of repairs can not only increase your shop revenue but can help build a strong relationship with your customers.

3. **Coach, mentor, and constantly communicate with the technician staff**

   Encouraging technicians to complete any PM repair in a timely manner is always a great idea to improve shop productivity, decrease wait times for down units, and increase cash flow for the shop. But let’s take that to another level.

   What if a technician loses sight of the incentive PM provides to the shop as a whole? This could lead to poor service for the customer and a breakdown of communication throughout the shop. A quick weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly 15-minute “stand-up” meeting to stress the importance of PM for your service operation can prove beneficial.

   Let the technicians know that the service writers and management staff rely on their expertise when it comes to PM repairs and potential upsell. Letting technicians know that someone has their back on the recommendations they make for a unit can build trust in a shop.
This also provides an opportunity to show some numbers on the amount of dollars that are being generated on PM repairs. Numbers open eyes and can get the technicians excited about the jobs they are about to perform. Keeping technicians engaged can boost morale and add an exciting dynamic to any service area.

4. **Communicate the PM schedule to the customer**

Customer communication is key in making tracking PM for any unit profitable. If the customer does not know a unit is due for service at your shop, how is that helping anyone?

There are no shortage of ways that you can communicate a proper PM schedule to your customers. The simplest way would be to pick up the phone and call. It’s quick, cheap, and will give you an opportunity for a personalized conversations that can build trust.

With access to a fax number, email address, or mailing address, you can forward on a canned PM “Due for Service” letter.

No matter which route is chosen, keeping your customer in the loop on their PM schedule is a key piece of any PM program. Now who says service guys can’t communicate?

5. **Prepare for the upcoming service**

Being unprepared could potentially be the worst thing to happen to an up-and-coming PM program in any shop. Not having the proper parts or fluids for a unit coming in can cause a trickle effect.

The technician loses trust in the person scheduling the work. The shop loses money because they have to scramble to get parts outside of the normal channels. The parts department questions the service writer about why the part is needed so quickly and about whether or not this could have been prevented. The maintenance could cause longer wait times and downtimes for the customer if the correct items are not present to complete the repair.

Proper reporting and forecasting help to provide VINs, makes, models, and years to ensure the correct parts are ready and available.

Not being prepared for upcoming service can cause some trust issues, both internally and externally. In such a competitive market, gaining trust can be the one key piece that keeps the doors open in any shop.

**Conclusion**

Making your preventative maintenance program a cornerstone of your shop does take some time and attention to detail. But with some determination and these five tips, you are already well on your way to getting there.

For more great information from Karmak’s team of industry experts and for access to our exclusive tip sheet “5 Ways to Ensure Accurate Meter Readings,” subscribe to our monthly *Karmak Trends* newsletter, by clicking [HERE](#) or visiting our website at [www.karmak.com](#).
5 Tips for Making Preventative Maintenance Work for Your Business

About Jason Goby

Raised in Raymond, Illinois, Jason Goby graduated with an A.S. degree in Automotive Technology before beginning his career at Karmak as a Customer Support Representative. He is currently a Product Owner for service in the Product Management department. Being a people-person, Jason enjoys the customer interaction and problem solving. It keeps him driven, focused, and grounded. Prior to coming to Karmak Jason worked 10 years in the automotive industry. He worked in all aspects of the industry from entry level mechanic, skilled service technician, to service advisor. Along with this service shop experience, Jason worked in the parts department working the counter, doing inventory, and purchasing.

About Adam Madsen

Raised in Anchorage, Alaska, Adam Madsen began his career in the heavy-duty industry as a young man working in a third-generation family-owned business: Drivetrain Distributors. He later went on to work for Transwest, located in Denver, before joining the Karmak team in 2010 as a Project Analyst in the Research & Design department. He is currently the lead for the Project Management department, specializing in the Lease/Rental module. Being a part of the process of building an ERP system has been a long-term goal of Adam’s, so seeing Karmak’s Fusion evolve into a premier product is exciting. Adam received an Associate’s degree in Communications, and is also a graduate of ATD Dealer Academy.

About Karmak

Karmak, Inc. is a leading provider of business management solutions for the commercial transportation industry. With more than 30 years of heavy-duty experience, we offer a unique approach combining innovative technology, strategic advice and best practices. Our success programs produce measurable results by improving ROI, mitigating risks and achieving operational excellence.

Serving more than 1,800 locations across North America, Karmak is an employee-owned company with headquarters in Carlinville, Illinois.

© 2013 Karmak, Inc. All rights reserved.