



TECHNOLOGIES

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SERIES

# Prepare Your Techs for Mobile Repair Success

*by Jason Goby, Karmak, Inc.*

A lot goes into running a successful mobile repair operation, but nothing is as important as putting your mobile repair techs in a position to have success. There are a couple of key reasons for this.

First, when they're out on the road, they are basically running their own branch of your business. Why wouldn't you go the extra mile to give them what they need?

Vicki Henderson of Midlands Carrier Transicold of Omaha, Nebraska summed up the reason behind preparing your techs.

"The biggest reason to even have mobile repair trucks is to provide good customer service. These guys are a one-man band, and they can't provide that type of customer service if they are out there spending more time fumbling around with software than turning wrenches," she says.

Second, finding a good mobile tech can be difficult. Not everyone will have the skills and confidence to work independently out on the road, and among those that do, few will jump at the chance to take on that role. So when you find a good one who flourishes in that role, you'll want to do everything you can to keep them happy.

We'll cover three areas that you'll want to address when it comes to getting your mobile repair techs ready to hit the road:

### Training

This step has to come before everything else. You can't just toss any tech out there on the road and expect him to be effective, and more importantly, profitable for your business. You have to start with one of your more talented techs and then continue to provide that person with the proper continuing education opportunities to keep them on top of their game.

Work out time in their schedule to give them a chance to come back to the shop to take some online or in-person training. Make sure they also have access to service bulletins, online help, hotline tech help, and repair manuals just as the technicians in the shop do. The shop and the mobile repair unit need to be one and the same when it comes to access to training materials.

Make sure your techs are comfortable with how your software solution is used inside the truck as well and take time to let them discover how their processes might be a little different than what they're used to in the shop.

"Let the tech walk through a standard repair in the mobile technician system and see how it's different from what they normally do in the shop. This way, they can lead and ask any specific questions they have about the system

rather than just presenting them with a training pamphlet or video that might not hit the points that they will really need out in the field,” says Henderson.

Proper training when it comes to mobile repair isn't limited to the tech in the truck, either. Training your dispatcher on best practices for mobile repair is just important. There's only so much one mobile tech can do in a day, so it's important that some thought go into where you are sending your mobile tech and when. You want the tech to spend more time helping your customers get back on the road, not sitting in traffic trying to get all the way across town.

While we're on the topic, make sure the protocol on dispatching your mobile tech is crystal clear in your business. The last thing you want is for your parts manager to dispatch your tech to one location at the same time your service manager is trying to send your tech somewhere else. Now, your tech is confused about where to be and both your parts manager and your service manager have different expectations about what the mobile tech is going to be accomplishing on that day. Details such as who will be doing the dispatching, who serves as the point of contact for the tech, and whether or not you want to have customers contact the tech directly are things that need to be hashed out ahead of time.

## Tools

This is the most obvious thing, right? If your mobile technician doesn't have the necessary tools to do the work you require, that person is not going to be very productive and your mobile repair operation isn't going to be very profitable. Not providing the proper tools is the top cardinal sin in mobile repair.

Depending on the type of repairs you expect to be done on the road and what type of business you're in, the repair tools are going to be a little different for each business. There are a few items that are universal, however.

Things like a laptop, air cards for internet access, a printer, and printer paper are becoming more the expectation and less of a luxury. But that's a good thing. Giving your technician these tools allows them to be self-sufficient and complete work on-site rather than bringing a bunch of hand-written notes back to the shop to be typed in at the end of the day or the next morning, often defeating the purpose of being out on the road.

Henderson agrees.

“In a worst-case scenario, they'll bring a whole stack of paperwork back in at the end of the day and bypass the whole mobile aspect of the business,” she says.

Let's not forget about items to help your tech battle the elements, either. Getting things done in the face of darkness, rain, snow, heavy traffic, or being lost is not easy, but flags, flares, strobes, a rain suit, boots, adequate lighting, and a GPS are a good start toward helping your tech fight through all that and do a good job.

### Incentive

Mobile repair trucks are often run most efficiently and profitably when the technician takes pride and ownership in their unit as if they are running their own branch of the business. That's much easier to do when the tech is properly incentivized to do so.

Give your tech a presentable vehicle to travel in. Make sure the outside of the truck is kept clean, make sure it has air conditioning and heat, and give your tech a comfortable space to work in once they are out on the road. This is going to be their office, after all. It probably goes without saying, but it's also important that the vehicle is reliable. It doesn't say a lot about your business if you can't keep your own vehicles on the road.

If you deem it appropriate to do so, give your mobile tech a window into the type of profit mobile repair is making for the company. Then, set profit goals for the tech to meet and consider instituting a commission for new work or a bonus for exceeding goals. As discussed earlier, good mobile repair techs are tough to find, but providing these types of incentives might make it easier to keep the ones you find.

Lastly, take some time at the end of the day to make sure your tech has everything they need before hitting the road again the next day. Are there any broken tools that need replacing? Are there any concerns with the mobile repair unit itself? Does the tech have any questions for someone back at the shop? It may not seem like much, but little things like that can let your tech know that you're looking out for their needs and it can make them feel like a part of the team even though they're away from the shop.

### Conclusion

An average tech's job is difficult enough as it is. Now throw in elements like working alone, in 100-degree heat, in six inches of snow, in a downpour, while traffic whizzes by at 70 MPH, while it's dark outside, and in areas of town they may not be all that familiar with. That's what a mobile repair tech has to deal with on a daily basis, and all that can be overwhelming.

Sure, you can't stop the rain, melt the snow, or slow down traffic, but if you work to get your mobile repair tech as prepared as possible before hitting the road, you can take great strides toward making them, and your mobile repair business, successful.

### 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 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.