



Recommended Training Best Practices 2015

Prepared by Car Care Professionals Network

Introduction

The Car Care Professionals Network (CCPN), a committee of successful repair shop owners recruited by the Auto Care Association to serve in an advisory capacity, notes that shop owners and managers have an important role in the education and training of their technicians and other staff. Shop owners and managers who understand the return on investment of having educated staff see a direct connection to the shop's ability to keep up with new vehicle technology and current business practices, therefore experiencing higher sales and increased profitability.

The CCPN committee members appreciate that manufacturers, distributors and other industry education and training providers want to know "what training works" at the shop level in order to develop and maintain a relationship that is imperative to industry growth.

The information below was submitted by the CCPN members to help these industry partners understand training practices that work for the shops.

Role of Shop Owner/Manager

The shop (owner/manager) should:

- Know the experience level of and career expectations for each technician (or other staff member) in order to determine the best the type of training to meet the needs of the technician and the shop.
- Meet with technicians, service advisors and other staff to outline their training requirements/expectations at the beginning of each calendar year.
- Find, research and assess the training that best meets the needs of each staff person and create a schedule for the year. This allows the training calendar to be developed and distributed to all employees. Drop-in classes and other opportunities can be added and attended as permitted.
- Reimburse technicians for ASE test costs upon proof of certification or certification renewal.
- Increase pay or pay a bonus to those earning ASE certification(s).

- Display ASE certificates in the lobby if so desired.
- Pay for the training costs and the technicians' time to travel to and attend training. Some shops give their technician extra vacation time to offset the time spent in training.
- Consider going to training with the technician, service writer and service manager so everyone understands the new material/information.
- Send a more experienced technician who can teach other technicians a new process or technology.
- Develop an internal mentoring program where each month, one technician in a shop teaches a new process to other technicians in the shop.
- Encourage training not directly applicable to the job (i.e., soft skills); an educated employee is a better and more confident employee.
- Measure and reward pre- and post-training performance and billing improvements, which identifies how training impacts the shop's bottom line.
- Track individual training participation and accomplishments.
- Provide a dedicated work station and computer to allow access to online training at the shop if technicians do not have access to tablets or laptops in their area. Locating a computer in a break or lunch room is helpful. Be careful about website access control.
- Explore new technology such as e-tablet inspection technology or similar approaches to inspection and customer presentation.

Role of Staff

The technician should:

- Be required to participate in training every year – a good rule of thumb is 40 to 45 hours per year per technician because it is easy to track, but determining needed training by category or certification will also work as long as the technician is accountable.
- Be ASE certified.

The service advisor should:

- Be required to participate in training every year. This may include listening to call recordings weekly as a training and quality control tool.
- Be ASE certified.

Role of Education and Training Providers

The following practices are recommended by the CCPN committee members for education and training providers, including manufacturers and distributors, based on what works in their shop. It is understood that shops may have different needs or perspectives on the education and training of their staff.

Training Awareness

Education and training providers should:

- Provide a comprehensive list of available training at the conclusion of the previous calendar year or beginning of the new calendar year to outline what is planned for several months/provide advanced scheduling, which enables shops to outline with staff at the beginning of the year what is expected.
- Provide plenty of notice for upcoming training if the above is not possible – as an example, four weeks out is too short of a notice.
- Provide access to and easily readable information or a catalogue of their available training and/or specify which training programs a particular technician or service advisor should take based on performance need.
- Provide an outline of the level of training (introductory, intermediate, advanced), a syllabus and a schedule, as well as the objectives (what the attendee should be able to do when he has completed the session).
- Have an available learning management system (LMS) in place to track learner progress (hours and categories).
- Provide a list of available training on their online parts ordering website.
- Provide a single source login for each vendor/training provider to see the training they are sponsoring/providing.
- Post on their website their training program availability and registration or on another easy-to-find location.
- Notify customers via email and in-person with sign-up sheet and class syllabus and confirm enrollment, day/time, etc.

Training/Troubleshooting Access

To provide added efficiency to help shops with specific issues, education and training providers should:

- Provide a system/process/site for technicians that have a specific diagnostic or installation question whereby he could easily access a web page of the manufacturer or the distributor that directly addresses the specific component in question. The technician gets a quick resolution in his bay that gives him immediate help and education. Also included here would be common failures and information about product updates.
- Provide a troubleshooting phone app for shops that allow cell phones in bays.
- Be more uniform about keyword searches and/or provide a technician information directory that could help lead site visitors to a variety of print, video, downloadable elements, etc.
- Develop a common collection/access point/list of manufacturers and distributors tech/help phone numbers.

Education and Training Delivery Methods

Online Training

Shops have found that online training works for:

- Teaching basic theory.
- Basic technical and sales training.
- Product introduction, basic technical and sales training modules.
- Access by technicians, service providers and other staff to use on their own time during the day as the work load allows, or at home.
- Well-designed courses that have a good price point with annual subscriptions available.
- Offering online real-time live classes as long as attendance makes the live class feasible.
- Offering easy access to video.

Shop owners/managers would like to have:

- Access to online skill testing and pre-employment testing/evaluations.
- More directed on-demand classes for problem solving.

Onsite/Classroom/Hands-on Training

Shops have found that onsite/classroom/hands-on training works for:

- Advanced hands-on training for technical instruction.
- General and specific applications.
- Hands-on training in the shop.

Shop owners/managers have found that trainers who put together a schedule in a division/region that covers two to three consecutive nights in two to three places within 100 mile radius, where they could bring in a trainer who would cover the schedule each month in that area at a better price point, is the best training environment. When using the same trainer each month, technicians seem to absorb better when they can relate to the trainer, no matter the class content. It is understood that there needs to be a commitment by the shops and upfront costs prepaid, which takes time to set up and maintain.

Google/YouTube Videos

Shops have found that Google/YouTube videos work:

- For specific jobs and troubleshooting in real-time situations (i.e., bearing removal from steering knuckle or use of special tools required or special procedures).
- Due to easy access.

Shop owners note that:

- It would be nice to have a list of desired procedure videos – ones that have been identified, catalogued and linked to a webpage.

- Be careful how YouTube is used as a training tool. Many techs believe they can fix anything with the help of YouTube – it may not be the best avenue for training.

Webinars

Shops have found that webinars work:

- As interactive training for both fundamental and advanced technical and sales training.
- For management and service advisor/shop leaders, not so much for technician training.
- If the length of the webinar is between 45 minutes and one hour.
- For large program(s) if the webinar is pre-scheduled for four to six weeks of one to two days per week at one hour each day.
- Where the shop has a high-speed and stable Internet connection for proper access.

Learning Assessment

Shops would love to have education and training providers:

- Offer need assessment vehicles/tests as a starting point for the training class, controlled by the shop manager/owner. This process allows for the class/topic to be the proper length needed to properly cover all aspects for a technician's success in each area studied.

Content Coverage

Shop owners would like to see the following education and training:

- Root cause analysis/troubleshooting/diagnostics.
- Scanner use and capabilities/best tools/scanners to use.
- Reflashing; how to, required equipment and required subscriptions.
- Introduction and advanced levels and include industry's most popular applications. Modules are good for introduction classes but advanced should be interactive webinar, online or onsite.
- Overall theory-based classes that are comprehensive and take the student from entry level to experienced. The classes should be broken down into modules due to the volume of information; perhaps entry level, moderate or advanced.
- Overviews and a system description should always accompany troubleshooting. Prefer content to be defined as advanced or elementary in order to better define the value and pertinent staff.
- Content should be available for every level, from GS to A technician, and an outline of skills, training, time and tools needed to achieve to get to each level.
- General courses on problem solving and decision-making (i.e., not auto care specific, depending on experience of participant).
- Basic courses such as oil changes.
- Debrief the shop owner or manager after training to judge training effectiveness.

NOTE: Product sales pitches should not be part of training.

Scheduling/Timing

Shop owners recommend that education and training providers:

- Record all web-based delivery products and make available on-demand all year long.
- Keep training condensed. Technicians are generally tired at the end of their days. Recommend one-hour-long segments.
- Staff prefers weekday evenings to weekends, although timing preferences for nights or weekends depends on the technician/shop.
- Consider the optimal time of year depending on climate. Repair shops are normally busier in extreme cold and heat, so March may be a good time. The worst weather is usually over by then. Also October, as summer holidays are over but the winter rush hasn't arrived yet.
- Make appointments for routine in-person calls.
- Repeat scheduling for online; winter months for onsite and after hours for webinars.
- Provide notices of available training with a **minimum of four weeks**.
- Depending on the class content, classroom time should be kept at four hours or less. Hands-on is best where available but often limits size of class. In some cases, full day classes work best.

Cost

Shop owners note that:

- In most cases shop owners are the ones who pay for training, and expect to pay.
- Some shops generally don't consider classes that are over \$200 per technician because a moderately-sized shop could easily see fees in the thousands.
- Typical quality training price runs approximately \$200 per class; when using subscriptions, the shop saves approximately 10 percent per class.
- Would most likely pay for training costs for an approximately two-to-three-hour session in the \$150-250 range per person depending on topic.
- Subscription-based training might be the way to go but being wary of cost is paramount; subscription-based fees for unlimited training works best because owners are now paying for it and seeing it every month – helps with budgeting.
- An annual subscription billed through the supplier (manufacturer/distributor) with an earn-back schedule would be helpful.
- They expect to pay for onsite training but would like either free or minimum cost for online and webinar introductory classes.
- They understand that advanced training by skilled instructors would require a fee.
- Private label parts training should be provided by the buying groups or vendor.

Support

In general, a technician's ego makes it hard for them to talk to someone and acknowledge they don't know the answer. If you get the right support personnel who are trained to help the technician while

earning their trust and using a team approach to problem solving the issues, you should create a partnership that will break down the fear of asking for help.

Warehouse distributors should consider providing a dinner and a great opportunity to talk and strengthen networks.

Finally

- In an ideal world, there would be one dashboard or website that had a comprehensive list of all training available, but that would take considerable effort and would need “an owner.”
- Shops should partner with local technical schools which may have information on new technology and provide an avenue for new technicians.

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