What's the Best Way to Measure the Efficiency of Your Field Service Technicians?

By Robert Sombach

Who is your best service technician? Most business owners would have a very quick answer to the question. Often that answer is based on your experience with the technician over multiple years. Who does the most service calls? Which service tech do your customers like best? Who do you spend the least amount of your time managing? Who uses the fewest parts to fix problems? These are important questions, but are they the *right* questions?

One practice many dealers undertake is standardizing the criteria they use to determine this, and then sharing it with the entire team on a regular basis so that everyone understands how the "top technician" is determined. Once your technicians understand how they will be graded, the team will begin to manage their own performance in a way that will help improve their score. The result? More efficient service technicians, happier customers, and a more profitable business.

Here are some of the most important measurements:

1. **Average time to complete a call.** Measure the time (in hours) onsite from start to finish for each call.

2. **Parts cost per call.** Total spent on parts, divided by the total number of service calls.

3. **First call success rate.** Of the total number of calls a technician makes, how many of them were return visits to the same equipment within a month? (total calls – total repeat calls/total calls).

While there is no shortage of possible measurements for your technicians, these are "the big three." We see some companies measure the number of service calls per day and use this to determine who is best, but we fine this is not always a reliable indicator. This metric can be skewed by things like travel time. As well, some companies have a hierarchal order of technicians that are sent out as service calls come in. In this case there will always be someone that does more calls than others, but that does not necessarily make them a better technician.

Another measure to consider for your company is the mean time between failures. That measurement applies to situations where the service technician resolves an issue, but there may be other upcoming problems on the device. In many cases, you would like the technician

to make those changes instead of coming back after a short time to make another repair. Though those two repairs may be unrelated, customers typically view this as "your fault" because they see the equipment as one system, whereas a technician is often concentrating on the single issue that is preventing the device from functioning properly.

The relation between the average time to complete a call and the parts cost per call is obvious. If you only measured the amount of time a technician takes there is a danger that reps would overprescribe parts to get equipment up and running. A successful technician will approach a call with an idea that the device should be fixed with as few parts as possible. However, they should know that, in some cases, not replacing a damaged or worn part while they are initially at the customer site only results in a return visit. The idea of a first call success rate brings the other two items into alignment.

When we track the first call success rate, what we are *really* tracking is if the job is done right. A customer does not want to see your technician often. It's a good bet that if your technician and customer are on a first name basis, they see each other far too much. If the technician knows that a future service call will occur because the device has not been thoroughly fixed, and that breakdown will be tracked and will count against their overall scorecard - they will think about fixing it properly.

Another consideration is to track the number of times that a service technician requires a return visit because they do not have the correct part to service the equipment. While it is not conceivable that your technicians will always have all the parts they need, they should have the most common parts available to fix devices. There are two things your internal staff can do to help set the technicians up for success: The first is proper triage. The second is optimal management of car stock.

software can help is to provide you a list of the various parts needed to fix each model device in your customer's equipment fleet, as well as the most common failures of parts a technician may encounter. As a rule, invest in inventory that is low cost, but high frequency of failure. More expensive parts should be tracked closely.

Technician Scorecard Sample

As illustrated in the example below, one criterion to measure service technician performance is never enough. We may like Bill because he is fast, but the numbers show he uses a lot of parts and ultimately the machines he repairs tend to break

Technician Name	Average Onsite Call Time	Parts Cost Per Call	First Call Success Rate	Overall Rank (Weighted Average)
BOB	Time: 45 mins. Rank: 2	Amount: $68.55 Rank: 3	Percentage: 87% Rank: 1	Score: 6 Rank: #1
JANE	Time: 1.05 hrs Rank: 4	Amount: $45.11 Rank: 1	Percentage: 82% Rank: 3	Score: 8 Rank: #3
BILL	Time: 35 mins. Rank: 1	Amount: $87.95 Rank: 4	Percentage: 80% Rank: 4	Score: 9 Rank: #4
HENRY	Time: 55 mins. Rank: 3	Amount: :$63.42 Rank: 2	Percentage: 85% Rank: 2	Score: 7 Rank: #2

Excessive travel to and from customer sites is the sworn enemy of profit. Usually you cannot bill travel time after the first call. At the same time, when customers have a breakdown they demand a service technician. This backdrop makes it difficult to get them to walk through a diagnosis over the phone. Delaying proper diagnosis of the problem helps neither you nor your customer. It may be that five minutes on the phone can ensure that when the service tech shows up next day the equipment can be up and running. It is critical to stress to your customers the scenario of ensuring your technician will come - but that you want to make sure they have the correct parts to get the device back up and running as quickly as possible.

Car stock is also a common concern for service companies. Car stock is a nice way of saying inventory. You cannot afford to have the entire inventory your technicians may need riding around in a van. It would need to be a really big van, in that case. One way that Miracle Service

down fairly soon after a service call – indicating he is not fixing all of the issues with the device. Bob on the other hand is not the fastest, nor is he the least expensive when it comes to parts; however, the devices he services tend to run longer before they need additional service. You may not have thought Bob was the best, but it turns out he is. Based on this matrix, you want the team to execute more like Bob, and less like Bill.

Sharing your technician scorecard with your team is a great way to ensure everyone is on the same page. No one wants to be on the bottom of the list, so this will often prove to be an effective motivator for your staff.

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