INCORPORATING MOBILE PLATFORMS INTO AN AUTO REPAIR SHOP WORKFLOW

Overview

The auto industry is ever changing. There has been quite a progression in automobile manufacturing, from the 1908 release of the Ford Model T with a 22 horse power four-cylinder engine to today's "ludicrous speed" all electric Tesla with a 0-60 time of 2.5 seconds.

Just as the auto industry is responsible for countless technological advances, the technology that goes into caring for cars and managing auto repair shops has likewise featured many innovations.

In this paper, we'll go over some of the ways that the auto industry has changed, and discuss how important mobile platforms are for an auto repair shop, what tools are available, how to incorporate them into your shop workflow, and the benefits of doing so.

How the Industry Has Changed

Mobile technology has been growing exponentially, especially in the last decade. In 2010 when the iPad was released, 18.6 million tablets were sold and shipped worldwide. At the time, Steve Jobs predicted that tablet sales would eventually outpace computer sales. The next year, tablet sales grew to 66.9 million. Just five years after Steve Jobs' prophecy, in 2015, tablet sales reached 206.8 million, creeping ever closer to the 238 million computer sales that year.

Mobile devices are the way of the future, and the future has already begun.

Mobile optimization with tablet devices in the automotive aftermarket is a growing trend, not only because it saves technicians time by eliminating the need to walk back and forth from a computer to look at or print information, but because tablets are more cost effective than PCs and laptops, have longer battery life, and are designed for mobility.

As auto technicians service increasingly complex vehicles in their repair bays, using technology to gain immediate access to quality repair information right at the vehicle is a huge time-saver.

More Complex Cars

Cars today aren't simply mechanical. There are deep connections between the computer and mechanical systems, and it's important for employees within the auto care industry to understand the advanced technology that is built into today's cars. Innovations in the auto industry are constant - think about advanced features like telematics, electric and hybrid engines, seat heating and cooling systems, blind spot assist, parking assist, blue tooth and mobile device connectivity, and even autopilot features.

It is impossible to keep up with these innovations without access to technology.

More Data than Ever Before

The total amount of human knowledge in our world is growing exponentially. Right now, it is estimated that the amount of knowledge doubles every thirteen months, and the rate of growth is getting ever faster. This effect is certainly seen in the auto industry as well.

The growth of Mitchell 1 as a provider of repair information to the auto industry for almost 100 years is a good example of this explosion of data. In 1918, Service Engineering Company published Reed Electrical Manuals (precursor to Mitchell 1), the first specs and diagrams of automobile electrical systems. Over nearly the last century, through a steady evolution, Mitchell 1 continued to acquire data at an increasing pace and volume and innovate ways to make the information quickly available to auto repair technicians.

With the growing complexity of cars, there is more data than ever before. Today, our software systems have more than tens of millions pages' worth of information, and the database is growing at a rate of 1,500,000 pages a year. In 1999, if we spread out all of the paper used to print the Mitchell Manuals into a single sheet, it would cover sixteen square miles - and we have far more data now than we did then.

If we still did it the "old school" way and printed all of that information on paper, it would be impossible to provide it to you in your auto shop. There just aren't enough book shelves - or trees - to accommodate that many books.

We needed technology to deliver all of this information in a way that allows you to sort through the data efficiently and conveniently. First, we put the data on CDs and DVDs accessible on a PC, and then transitioned to Web-based software that is easy to access 24/7.

And now we have the mobile technology to deliver the data to you where you need it - right in the repair bays. It's another way to help auto professionals keep up with the rapid growth of data needed to run an effective auto repair shop.

Why We Need Mobile Platforms

The world is mobile - 88% of adults in the United States have cell phones, and half of those are smartphones.

We are used to working on mobile devices with intuitive features like touchscreens, swipe and drag commands, etc. and accustomed to the convenience of having all of the information we need right at our fingertips.

Mobile devices have not only made many aspects of our lives more convenient, from connecting with each other to banking and shopping online, but now have made their way into our auto repair facilities.

Increase Productivity

In an automotive repair business, time is money. Adapting to mobile platforms that allow your technicians to gather diagnostic information, and service cars from the repair bays can save a lot of time. Techs no longer have to walk to the office or computer workstation to find or print the needed information. And, if there are more technicians than computers in the shop, wait times that further slow the repair process can be reduced, or even eliminated.

By incorporating mobile platforms, you can reduce time wasted, give techs more time for actual vehicle repairs and increase productivity.

Customer Expectations and Competition

With the age of mobility has come a new expectation for the way we shop and conduct business.

Consumers are used to getting the things that they want faster and easier. They expect advanced technology everywhere they go — and that includes their auto repair shop.

As vehicle design and technology advance rapidly, customers have come to expect a certain level of expertise and speed when they deal with anything related to their car, including repairs. If they feel that the auto shop is not up to speed with their high-tech car, they may look elsewhere. And while many shops are still lagging, many have adopted mobile technologies and are improving their shop workflow and customer experience.

Auto repair information technology is keeping up with OEM advances, and companies like Mitchell 1 make it their top priority to develop solutions to help shops work more efficiently and accurately, as well as improve communication, within the shop and to engage with customers.

Tools to Improve Workflow

ProDemand Mobile

All of the power of the industry-leading ProDemand® repair information software is now optimized for both Android and Apple tablet devices, providing auto repair technicians access to repair information where they need it most - right at the vehicle.

Technicians can take advantage of powerful time-saving diagnostic features - such as Real Fixes and a Top 10 Repairs list - that draw on information from real-world auto fixes. These insights from professional technicians who have solved the same vehicle issue in their shops help techs diagnose the vehicle quickly and accurately.

ProDemand Mobile is designed to work intuitively with your tablet, incorporating swipe, drag, scroll and pinch touchscreen gestures with an interface that is designed to make your user experience simple and seamless.

Having access to repair information on a tablet improves efficiency by making diagnostic, specifications, procedures, wiring diagrams etc. available to the technician right at the vehicle - there's no need to bring printouts to the repair bay.

Mobile ManagerPro

On the shop management side, Mobile ManagerPro™ allows you to extend the Manager™ SE shop management system into your driveway and repair bays, with features to save you time, optimize your workflow, and add convenience to your work. With your own tablet, or a pre-configured Android tablet from Mitchell 1, you can manage your shop, and start multi-point inspections, job estimates, and repair orders from the driveway - or wherever the vehicle is located.

Mobile ManagerPro is fully integrated with Manager SE, so you have access to the complete shop management system. The system incorporates the same intuitive mobile features like swipe, scroll, drag and pinch controls that you use on your tablet and smartphone, so it's familiar and easy to use.

By adding Mobile ManagerPro to your automotive repair shop, you can increase your billable hours and complete jobs faster, improving your bottom line and customer experience. Highlights include:

- ❑ Fast VIN and license plate decoding

- ❑ Customizable multi-point inspection tools

- ❑ Complete vehicle diagnosis including photos

- ❑ Digital estimates and repair orders (no need to handwrite!)

- ❑ Instant message capability through Team Chat

Both the desktop and mobile versions of ProDemand and Manager SE are fully integrated with each other, streamlining the workflow between repair information and shop management to fully empower technicians in the bays, in the office, or wherever they are.

Social CRM

It's important to stay in front of your consumers and deliver the information they want in the way they want to receive it. Studies show that over 50 percent of average daily interaction with digital media occurs on mobile devices — that's 2.8 hours on average per day.

Your marketing materials have to look good on these mobile devices to capture your customers' attention and send the right message.

Staying current with all the latest specifications for mobile-friendly marketing messages can be a challenge.

With the Mitchell 1 SocialCRM auto repair shop marketing service, it's easy - we do it for you. In fact, the comprehensive service is designed to manage all your marketing efforts to help you retain customers and attract new ones with automated tools - so that you can focus on repairing vehicles.

The SocialCRM service generates automatic emails to your consumers that look good on mobile devices, including service reminders and thank-you notes.

SocialCRM can actually detect the device your customer is using to view the email and reconfigure the layout for optimal viewing.

We also designed our "request appointment" page specifically for mobile device functionality, so your customers can quickly and easily schedule work with you straight from their phones.

Benefits of Integrating Mobile Platforms

Mobile platforms make things faster and easier. Think about mobile banking as an example.

Remember when you had to go to the bank to deposit a check?

All the time it took to sit in traffic, park, wait in line, fill out a deposit slip and then go see the teller? When you're finished, you head right back into traffic to head home.

Mobile devices have saved us all of that time, with mobile banking features that allow you to deposit a check within minutes wherever you are, simply by taking a picture with your phone.

The same concepts apply to auto repair and can similarly save you time, which means more billable hours, and less time wasted on minutia.

Here are some of the ways integrating mobile platforms into your workflow can benefit you:

➢ **Workload Management:** Mobile platforms enable technicians to check job assignments and updates from their phone or tablet, removing the need to stop working and go check the vehicle status. You can also reduce redundancy in workflow, so a technician doesn't have to enter in the same information multiple times. For example, instead of a technician manually writing the VIN number of a car down in the repair bay, and then walking to the computer and typing it into the system to get information, your technician will simply scan the VIN into a tablet once, and get all of the information they need right there.

➢ **Cost Efficient:** Purchasing a computer for each repair bay is more expensive and less convenient than embracing mobile technology. With mobile-friendly software, technicians can use tablets, which are cheaper, eliminating the need to purchase expensive computer equipment that needs to be replaced every few years.

➢ **Improve Customer Experience:** Mobile technology can improve the customer's experience by providing them with input systems that are quicker and easier to use and not overloading them with paperwork.

They can see their information on screen, including pictures of the vehicle, which adds transparency, and makes customers happier. Happier customers mean more business for you.

➢ **Easier Follow-Up and Marketing Management:** Mobile platforms make it easier for you to follow up with customers - many of whom would prefer email or text updates than time-consuming phone calls.

On top of that, having them enter their information into tablets makes it much easier to get their email addresses, which is beneficial for your marketing efforts.

➢ **Better Inspections:** Tablet-based inspections have many advantages:

- Vehicle history reports available at the touch of a button
- Customer specific information is easy to access, including pictures and individual reports
- Customers and technicians can schedule appointments through the software, communicate with each other, and technicians can share reminders with customers
- On-the-spot data entry — technicians can input data from the vehicle in real time, so they don't have to rely on memory later, or spend time to go and look at the vehicle again

➢ **Paperless:** You no longer have to handwrite documentation, which saves you:

- **Time:** No more walking to and from the printer, and no more time spent flipping through filing cabinets or stacks of estimates
- **Money**: Reduce paper and ink costs, as well as paper storage costs
- **Space:** No more bulky filing cabinets and unruly stacks of paper
- **Headaches:** Never misplace files again. All the information you need is available within the mobile system after the data is inputted

➤ **Save Time:** The quick license plate and VIN decoding features instantly provide you with all vehicle specific data, including engine type, service history, and account details, saving you an estimated 10 to 15 minutes right off the bat. And that's just one of many time saving features, which include customizable multi-point inspections that you can create and re-use for common jobs.

➤ **Speed Up the Approval Process:** With Mobile ManagerPro, you can take pictures of a customer's vehicle with your tablet and text or email them directly to the customer, so that they can approve the jobs faster. Empowering customers to review pictures, estimates, inspections and work orders from their mobile device saves even more time. When technicians send text messages to customers, they most often receive a response within a minute, compared to an average of over an hour to receive a response from a phone call. By speeding up response time from customers, technicians can move along the approval process faster.

➤ **Credibility:** High quality technological systems that make your customers' experience easier and more transparent make you look more professional and trustworthy. Because of that, customers are more likely to trust you with their repairs, and refer their friends and family to you. You become the "great auto repair shop" that they come back to when they need service on their car.

➤ **Improve Customer Loyalty:** Automated service reminders, thank you notes, and targeted email promotions optimized for your customers' mobile devices help you stay on your customers' mind, and build a connection with them that will keep them coming back to your shop regularly.

➤ **Work from Anywhere:** You don't have to be in the office to access scheduling reminders and custom reports. With mobile applications you can do that from anywhere, which is more convenient for you and keeps your entire team on track.

➤ **Better Communication with Staff:** Instant messaging through Mobile ManagerPro's Team Chat feature keeps your shop connected, allowing staff members to reach out to each other when they need to, thus improving communication throughout the shop.

➢ **Going Green:** Like many businesses, traditional auto repair shops require a lot of paper. Estimates, vehicle inspections, repair orders, and more add up quickly. Meanwhile, the EPA estimates that more than 85 million tons of paper, 500 million ink cartridges and 100 million toner cartridges end up in the waste stream every year, with businesses being a major contributor to the waste. Replacing paper intensive functions of your business will contribute to reducing waste and lowering the environmental impact of doing business.

➢ **More Accurate Data Capture:** Technicians can enter in information directly into a software program right from the repair bay, removing errors caused by forgetfulness and hard-to-read handwriting.

Conclusion:

With the speed of technological advancement today, integrating mobile platforms into your auto repair shop is crucial. Luckily, there are easy-to-use mobile platforms such as ProDemand Mobile and Mobile ManagerPro out there that can provide you with repair information and shop management tools right from the repair bays.

Incorporating mobile technology into your auto repair shop's workflow can save you time and money, improve your customer experience, make a positive impact on the environment and increase your productivity and bottom line.

For more information call us: 888-724-6742
Or find your local Mitchell 1 sales representative: mitchellrep.com

Sources:

➢ http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/ford-motor-company-unveils-the-model-t

➢ https://shiftmobility.com/5-reasons-auto-techs-need-mobile-repair-diagnostic-solution-fits-palm-hand/

➢ http://www.extremetech.com/computing/185937-in-2015-tablet-sales-will-finally-surpass-pcs-fulfilling-steve-jobs-post-pc-prophecy

➢ http://www.panasonicforbusiness.com/2012/02/the-future-of-tablets-in-the-automotive-market/

➢ http://www.ratchetandwrench.com/RatchetWrench/June-2015/The-Shop-of-Tomorrow/

➢ http://blog.repairpal-shops.com/customer-service-in-the-palm-of-your-hand/

➢ http://mitchell1.com/mobile-managerpro/

➢ http://mitchell1.com/press/mitchell-1-introduces-prodemand-mobile/

➢ http://mitchell1.com/shopconnection/mobile-friendly-emails-and-appointments/

➢ http://www.smartinsights.com/mobile-marketing/mobile-marketing-analytics/mobile-marketing-statistics/

➢ http://mitchell1.com/socialcrm/

➢ https://www.twilio.com/blog/2015/01/bolt-automotive-sms-communication-twilio-sms.html

➢ http://mitchell1.com/socialcrm/mobile-marketing/

➢ http://mitchell1.com/prodemand/

➢ http://www.statisticbrain.com/computer-sales-statistics/

➢ https://www.prodemand.com/

➢ http://mitchell1.com/shopconnection/meet-prodemand-mobile/