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Automation tool aids tech-to-adviser transition

The TechWALL service drive management system streamlines time-consuming processes, service director says.

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Ken Wysocky

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A new service drive management system called techWALL has helped smoothen the transition technicians have made adding **service adviser** duties at Shaheen Chevrolet's Oil Change & Tire Center.

The lube center started using techWALL in mid-November. The appeal? It automates many time-consuming processes, such as creating repair orders and invoices and obtaining **service** approvals from customers, said Tom Hernly, service director at the dealership, based in Lansing, Mich. It's one of three stores owned by the Shaheen Automotive Group.

"I've been here for 18 years and I think adopting this **technology** is the greatest thing we've ever done," he said.



Tom Hernly,
service director at
Shaheen Chevrolet
in Lansing, Mich.

Developed by Gratis Solutions, techWALL – which integrates with all dealer management systems – improves efficiency by streamlining what otherwise can be a disjointed and lengthy service process. This, in turn, improves the customer experience, Hernly said.

Not only does it dramatically reduce the time it takes for customers to authorize service recommendations, it also eliminates the need for service advisers and technicians to walk back and forth to confer or order parts at the parts counter, Hernly said.

If a customer comes in for a 60,000-mile service checkup, for example, a technician uses a smart tablet to call up a service menu, with parts and labor costs clearly displayed for full transparency. That gets to customers; after they authorize it, the system automatically creates a repair order, he said.

If a subsequent multipoint inspection reveals things that need attention, the technician can take photos of the items in question, attach them to the inspection and text it to the customer, who can then accept or decline any of the recommendations.

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When repairs are authorized, the parts department gets notified automatically. And another click sends an invoice to customers, who can pay via their smartphones, Hernly said.

Shaheen pays a monthly fee per store to use the software. While Hernly wouldn't disclose the price, he said it's very competitive with other service-lane products.

The service department at Shaheen Chevrolet uses the software, too, he said.

"Some advisers feel a little threatened, to a degree," said Hernly. "But the bottom line is you have to continually keep trying to improve; it's either grow or die."

Hernly said he's already seen a significant difference in terms of better customer satisfaction, efficiency and profitability at the lube center. Reputation scores and Google reviews also have improved.

"The amount of surveys we get back from customers has quadrupled because of this technology," he said. "Typically, customers would only fill out a survey if they were upset, but not anymore."

"TechWALL has completely changed how we do business."

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