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How I do diagnostics

Managing a 24/7 business where the work is continuous, I have to best utilise a finite team of technicians. It's not like a dealership, where you book in at 8am, and the customer collects at 5:30pm. For me, productivity is paramount.

When a vehicle arrives with say, an EML fault, we need to connect to the diagnostic equipment. Modern vehicles are so technically complex, and many faults are either electrical or electronic systems-based.

While the equipment doesn't give a definitive answer, it provides a general direction as to where the problem might be. Then finding the root cause may involve a more intrusive investigation. In that case, the technician is tied to that one job until it is completed.

As we run a busy workshop, I cannot afford having a technician tied up for long periods diagnosing a fault. The simple process is that they run a diagnosis, identify the problem and assess if the repair can be completed in a reasonable time. Most of the time, we'll come up with a solution to the problem, perform the repair and the vehicle returns to duty. If more intensive work is required, then we would utilise specialist support.

If a technician finds a fault, we record it. Then we make sure that other technicians are aware of what we found using a toolbox talk format. Another identical vehicle might come in with a similar fault tomorrow! If you inform the team, it assists and simplifies the diagnostic process.

The toolbox talk is done by the supervision team. Sometimes they take place verbally over a brew; more technical solutions are documented for future reference purposes.

This isn't easy, as we run a seven-day shift pattern, so technicians in different shifts might not see each other for days at a time.

Still, we make sure everybody understands what the common faults are. If there is a constant failure of a particular component or system, we will feed back to the manufacturer as part of liaison meetings to inform and develop product improvements.



Michael Sweetmore
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