

It's Time To Do Your Homework

It's that time of year – we have just rolled over into 2020 and it's time to work on your business. I am sure you spent the last quarter of 2019 making sure all of your training was up to date. With that finished, now you can take a look at the rest of the business.

I know that taking a step back and looking at your business is difficult. Many are “short one person” and always seem to be filling in for someone/somewhere/somehow and again spending more time *in* the business rather than *on* it.

Did you make any changes or improvements to your business in 2019? Maybe you added some new equipment, acquired a new OEM certification or became I-CAR Gold Class. One of the things you should update is your digital business profile. If you are on an insurance direct repair program (DRP) or have one of several OEM certifications, you have a digital business profile managed by a third party. Some of it is maintained and updated by that third party, but since it is your information, I encourage you to review the content. I looked through one the other day which contained several pages of information informing different agencies about the business. While the information provided was good, I also noticed areas that were not completed. All the required information was finalized, but optional areas that could have been updated to illustrate the businesses capabilities a little better were left blank.

While we are on the subject of DRPs, now is also a good time to look through any direct repair program contracts. There have been a lot of changes in this arena lately and understanding those changes is important. I have talked to several shops about a new change with one insurer that requires you to provide a “credit” (which we all know is a penalty) if you do not meet certain guidelines. While some of this has been going on for a while, it seems the insurers are raising their expectations and increasing the credits. A little homework will help you realize what these credits might actually be costing you in the long term.

Reviewing your vendor agreements is something else you might want to delve into this time of year. Have you been buying parts from the same supplier for a while? If so, you might want to review your service needs with them. As a loyal customer, there might be some things the supplier can do for you to help meet your shop's initiatives. For example, asking them to locate a part for you versus putting it on the next day's stock order or holding parts until all the parts for a particular job are received. They can even provide you with the OEM repair procedures for the parts you purchase from them. Honing your relationship with your parts supplier might also help when you need to bring a vehicle into their service department.

Discussing work performance with employees is a piece of homework that is often put off until a better time. Setting the stage early in the year is beneficial when you will need their help to meet the goals you set for your business. Are your employees aware of your cycle time and touch time goals? Do you keep them informed about their specific production performance? Being upfront with employees on the things that matter to you and the business can often remove some stress you have over your initiatives. This is also a good time to review training needs with them so you are not rushing through the last quarter trying to get all the requirements met.

The last piece of homework and what I believe to be the most important involves the person in the mirror. What have you done for you? You are a vital part of your business – everyone around you looks towards you for their success. Look at the things on your list that you have put off in hopes of a better opportunity. You must take time to manage the things important to you in order to be prepared each day to lead your business towards sustainability.

As you make this homework a habit, I feel you will notice a bit more harmony in your business allowing you to realize exactly what is happening in your business day to day. Good luck in the new year and get your homework turned in!