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## Planning ahead is a good Covid treatment

The new year has not started well as hopes for an end to Covid interruptions have been trashed. Workshops around the nation are still facing staff shortages and supply chain interruptions. However, getting work is not the problem because most workshops are extremely busy.

The problem everyone is facing is how to plan income-producing work while coping with the above challenges. One of the solutions is that workshops need to be as pre-organised as possible, beginning with planning your day, and a day ahead.

Here are some tips that will help daily planning:

### Confirm booking details

A lot of unnecessary and time-consuming mistakes can be traced back to poor customer information being gathered and properly documented at the time of booking in a vehicle.

It is imperative that every staff member is trained how to take a booking and document the minimum customer details, which are:

- name
- contact number
- vehicle details and registration
- job requirements
- drop-off and pick-up times.

Even these basic details will help with job planning and preparation, and also means the customer can be contacted for rescheduling or checking fault details.

### **Understand the hours available and hours booked**

Job prices can vary from \$50 to \$5,000 so determining your workshop's booking capacity only on the number of jobs booked in will not be the best approach.

It would be much better to calculate how many labour hours you have available each day and subtract the estimated hours per job as each booking is received.

This is by no means fool proof, but it can often be accurate, with just the right amount of work booked in to fill the hours comfortably. This methodology can be automated for those booking straight into an electronic diary.

### **Review vehicle history**

Traditionally, this is a task best done when the customer drops in their vehicle, after the booking has been made and confirmed. By reviewing a vehicle's history with them, in person at the workshop, you will be more likely to get the go ahead on repair items that might have been flagged in previous invoices.

However, given disruptions to the parts supply chain, it may be preferable to do the review when the customer actually books the car in. This means that approval to go ahead on repairs will give the workshop some time to pre-order required parts.

### **Pre-order parts**

The suppliers are suffering too from supply chain interruption and stock shortages, so it makes sense for workshops to review the diary at least one or two days in advance so that parts required can be pre-ordered.

### **Send booking reminders**

Customers not showing up can put a big dent in your sold hours. As Covid-19 moves through the community there will be an increased likelihood of this happening.

It's much better to know well in advance if a customer can't make it. It makes managing the diary a lot safer.

The only way to reduce the frequency of no-shows, is to send out 24 or 48 hour booking reminders.

### **Managing the type of work booked in**

The natural tendency has been to book jobs in on a first come, first served basis.

Obviously any job is better than nothing, but when bookings are starting to fill the diary a day or two in advance, you are in a position to start allocating work to days that will match the technicians and resources you have on hand.

For example, a day booked with only diagnostic work and timing belts on late model vehicles will most probably result in junior staff standing around doing very little. In this instance space could be left in the diary for general servicing and repairs and book in the more advanced jobs only at the last minute.

**Daily toolbox meetings**

Workshops can be a very busy place in the morning with customers dropping off vehicles and technicians getting started on jobs. This hive of activity is great, but if everyone is just working away in their own little world it can be less productive than it looks. To ensure nothing is being missed, it is a good idea to bring the team together for a quick five-minute toolbox meeting. This will make the entire team much more aware of what the job priorities are and warn them of any potential issues.

**Prioritise cancelations**

If you do need to cancel bookings due to staff shortages, this advice may go against your conscience, but you could be justified for being slightly selfish and prioritising jobs based on what is best for your workshop. It could be that simple service and repairs jobs will keep the workshop income flowing as opposed to those larger and more complicated breakdown jobs.

Hopefully everyone will have learned to live with the Covid variants by the end of the year but in the meantime, spending an extra ten minutes or so every day planning for the day ahead will help to minimise costly disruptions.

The place to start is [www.tatbiz.net.au/capricorn](http://www.tatbiz.net.au/capricorn)

*Just go for it*