



CAPRICORN
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Don't be silly about the silly season

With the holiday season just around the corner, now is the time to start preparing your business for the inevitable last minute rush to get vehicle, opening hours and staff issues sorted. More importantly, start thinking right now about cashflow over the silly season.

Most workshops are usually at their busiest heading into Christmas. Customers seem happy to spend money to ensure that they won't find themselves stranded on the side of a country road with a car full of kids yelling 'are we there yet?'.

However this doesn't mean that the silly season is the most profitable time of the year. Experience tells us that December and January can end up being financially poor months with many businesses struggling to make a profit.

Don't wait until 24 December to position your business to comfortably and profitably handle the holiday period. Here are some things to think about right now.

What will your cashflow look like?

Before deciding what days you will close the workshop over the holiday season, you need to know if there will be sufficient cashflow to cover both December and January. Have you accounted for reduced or even nil income over the Christmas and New Year period? Have staff holiday pays and bonuses been put aside? Is there a budget for the end of year party?

Take the time to forecast expenses to ensure there will be enough cash so that you can enjoy your own break with family and friends without having to worry about the bank balance.

Will you open or close the workshop?

Make your decision early so staff are aware and plans can be put into place.

There is no wrong or right decision. Do what is best for you, your business and your staff. Some businesses see great opportunity in running a skeleton staff to pick up customers from workshops that are closed. Others see it as the only opportunity to give everyone a break from the business.

Who will work or play?

Once the decision is made let everyone know so that staff can make their own plans. If the decision is to stay open, ensure suitable staff are available. Make sure these working staff get some breaks well before Christmas or later in January so that they don't burn out.

Confide in your customers?

Make sure your customers know the plan. Start communicating with them as soon as possible and keep the communication going until things return to normal around mid January. These could include group SMS, emails, social media, Christmas card mail-out and a prominent sign at the workshop.

This communication routine must be carried out, whether the workshop is going to be open or closed.

Air conditioning services can help the bottom line?

A motorists thoughts will inevitably turn to air conditioning comfort with hot weather and above average holiday driving. A fully functional aircon is so essential that customers are usually happy to spend whatever is necessary to make sure it keeps going.

Aircon servicing is a justifiable upsell. Good technicians will agree that an annual aircon service is the very least that should be done on every vehicle to avoid eventual very costly repairs. Do thorough aircon inspections and present a detailed report to the customer. The net result should be an increase in average sales through November and December. You might be glad you took this advice when the wallet grows thinner just after the Christmas - New Year break.

Refer back to the July 2017 TaT Biz step about focusing on the cars you have in workshop – not the ones you don't. This dealt with calculating the revenue potential of servicing and common upsells. There's an average service price calculator online – enter your figures to calculate your potential average service price. You might be surprised at the result. You can download it at www.tatbiz.net.au/resources

Have you wished your customers happy Christmas?

At Christmas, you have a legitimate reason to contact your entire database. This can be done via SMS, email or post. It gives you an opportunity to thank your customers for their patronage and wish them a happy Christmas. It also helps to put your business in top of mind for the future. Use this opportunity to tell them of your holiday open and close times. Do this in late November.

Are you engaging in the Christmas spirit?

In this era of stressful living and global uncertainties, people will appreciate a little joy in their lives and you can do that by getting involved in the Christmas spirit.

Put up some decorations, give some prizes or hampers away and promote it on social media. It's simple and effective. It will motivate your staff and leave a warm and fuzzy feeling with your customers.

So make sure your business is prepared for the silly season. All opportunities will be lost if you wait until mid December.

The place to start is www.tatbiz.net.au/capricorn

Just go for it