It’s no secret that dealers face intense competition from independent repair shops for consumers’ service dollars, while longer service intervals and greater vehicle reliability mean fewer big ticket repairs. To retain customers and attract new ones, many OEMs are promoting the ease and convenience of 24/7 online appointment scheduling using Xtime ServiceCRM®.

Yet some OEMs are also urging dealers to embrace no-appointment basic maintenance programs—strategies that at first glance may seem at cross purposes with one another.

At Xtime, we provide service managers with the tools to better manage all of their customers’ appointments or walk-ins. By scheduling appointments in Xtime, service managers can more tightly control workflow—adding predictability in the service drive that makes it easier to handle those unscheduled customers. In addition, by using Xtime’s shop loading features, service managers can track the timing and the type of work sent to the backshop, as well as keep tabs on the number of walk-ins and waiters they have for the day. All of this helps service managers better manage whatever comes their way!
Xtime Experts | Tom McMullin, Service Manager, Peltier Nissan, Tyler, Texas

Smooth Transition From DMS to Nissan One to One Service Scheduling

At Peltier Nissan, advisors handle appointment scheduling. After deploying Xtime in September 2012, advisors quickly made the transition from booking in the DMS to using Xtime. Not only is the scheduling process faster, but advisors can easily view customers’ service history and remind them about previously declined services, or suggest additional services. “We used to have to bounce between screens to look at history, which takes time,” McMullin says. “With Nissan One to One Service Scheduling, you can go right to the history.”

Online Scheduling Surpasses 10% in First Six Months

To promote online scheduling, Peltier sent out a “Welcome to Online Scheduling” email campaign using the Marketing Campaigns feature in ServiceCRM. Sales consultants and service advisors also do their part by helping newcar buyers set up a password and username, and then book their first appointment. The motivation? “Retention,” McMullin says.

By paying attention to online scheduling, it quickly caught on. After just 6 months, more than 10% of Peltier’s service customers book their own appointments online. “We had three new web customers that came in today,” McMullin says. “All of them showed up on time, and they averaged $309 a ticket.”

Eliminating Double Bookings, Improving Workflow Predictability

As a participant in Nissan’s Express Service Program, about 60% of his customers are walk-ins, and that means a high level of workflow unpredictability. That makes it even more important for him to handle his appointments effectively. Before using Xtime, double bookings were also common, leading the service drive to back up mid-morning. McMullin eliminated that issue by allowing advisors to take one appointment every 15 minutes. “With the old system you could have five people scheduled for the same time and not know it unless we went to another screen and looked,” he says. “With Xtime, it’s not an issue. The system doesn’t let us overbook.”

Improving the Walk-Around to Identify Sales Opportunities

While the Express advisors were following a specific walk-around inspection script, main shop advisors each had their own style—some discussed vehicle issues at the car, some brought customers to their desk, others sent customers on their way and called them afterward. McMullin felt that more consistency in the check-in process coupled with a thorough walk-around with the customer present would help identify and sell additional services.

Several months ago, Peltier deployed ServiceTab on the iPad. With advisors able to check in customers and view history at the vehicle, customers are checked-in quickly, he says. ServiceTab also helps advisors in selling additional services to their many walk-ins, McMullin says.

Having rapid access to service history can mean the difference between a customer saying “yes” to an additional service or becoming impatient and declining. “If you’re spending 10 minutes looking up history and looking up recalls, during that 10 minutes you could have lost your sale,” he says. “If you can hit them in that first few minutes you have a better chance for the sale.”

Not only has his CSI risen, revenue has increased 10%, overall by generating service recommendations from inspections. Standouts include sales of alignments (up 20%) and headlight restorations. “It’s going to continue to grow,” McMullin says.
Gregg Manson, Vice President, Consulting Services for Xtime

Service Department Myths That May Be Holding You Back

Established industries operate under certain longstanding assumptions about customers and the marketplace. But as technology and consumer expectations evolve, that conventional wisdom can get in the way of adapting to new conditions. Automotive service departments are no exception.

Gregg Manson, former vice president of fixed operations for AutoNation’s 220 stores and now Vice President of Field Services for Xtime, talks about the myths he hears most often from service managers—and how a willingness to rethink some of those beliefs can clear a path for service managers to reach a new level of performance.

1. If I put my prices on the web, customers will go elsewhere.
   If you’re a well-run service department, you’re keeping track of what the competition charges. While your prices may be somewhat higher than nearby independent shops, they shouldn’t be so far out of whack that it would automatically take you out of the running for service dollars.

   There will always be customers who will shop by price and price alone. But many customers give as much or more weight to their experience—how well they’re treated, their relationships with you and your staff, whether the work gets done right the first time.

   So know what your competition is doing, don’t worry about hiding your prices and put your time and energy into making sure you’re delivering that superior experience!

2. I’m a repair shop, not a retailer.
   To many service managers, auto dealers aren’t retailers, they’re repair shops providing a needed service. But the days are long gone that warranty work made up the bulk of a service department’s business.

   To consumers, auto dealers are retailers just like grocery stores, shops at the mall and restaurants.

   Why does eliminating the distinction between retailer and repair shop matter? Highly-regarded retailers know that customers have choices, and customers have to come first to keep them coming back. For dealers, that means having hours that meet customers’ needs, such as evening, Saturday and yes, even Sunday hours; making it easy for customers to book an appointment anywhere, anytime using online scheduling; making sure customers are greeted promptly and taken care of quickly when they arrive.

3. I’m a mass market brand. My customers are different from those at the Mercedes-Benz dealership.
   Luxury car owners expect a lot from dealers. But they aren’t the only ones! A lot of people who have a Mercedes or BMW in their garage also have a Ford or a Hyundai. Sure, they may expect free Starbucks and a plusher waiting room at their luxury brand dealership, but as far as fundamental expectations—being treated courteously, feeling that their business is valued and having their vehicle serviced quickly and well—customers are all the same!

4. My customers like to come to my desk to talk with me.
   You may be in the habit of bringing customers to your desk to go over the RO and pricing, but that’s your space, where you’re most comfortable. Many customers don’t get any thrill out of watching the back of your screen as your type. They’d just as soon get checked in at their vehicle and be on their way. By using ServiceTab for the iPad, advisors can check in customers, right on the drive, going over vehicle issues where customers can see them with their own eyes.

5. My customers are in a hurry. They don’t want to inspect the vehicle with me.
   While there are certain customers who have all the time in the world to shoot the breeze, many are busy. They want to get in and out of the dealership without wasting time. When inspections are done on the drive using ServiceTab, customers see the process as an efficient and technologically up-to-date way to quickly get them the information they need to make informed decisions about the work they want done on the vehicle.
Xtime University's Newest Live Webinar—Driving Web Profits

Driving Web Profits teaches you how to increase your revenue by taking full advantage of your Xtime online scheduling capabilities. The course demonstrates Xtime's new, cutting edge online scheduling tool—and teaches you how to market online scheduling to your customers—making their lives easier and your dealership more profitable!

In Driving Web Profits, you’ll learn:
- How to use Consumer 7—the most convenient online scheduling tool in the industry
- Why customers love Consumer 7
- How Consumer 7 increases your profits
- How to drive traffic to your dealership’s website
- How to promote online scheduling within your dealership
- How to market your dealership using today’s most popular networking sites—Facebook and Twitter
- How to change capacities for the current day

The course even gives you a free link to a new “Using Consumer 7” training video that you can use on your website to teach your customers how to use Consumer 7.

Like all Xtime University webinars, Driving Web Profits is free to attend. To register, just go to Xtime University by logging in to Xtime and clicking Help, then clicking the Driving Web Profits link under Live Training. Hosted webinars are offered online, Monday through Friday, starting at 6am PST/9am EST. Choose the date and time that best fits your schedule. You’ll receive a confirmation email with dial-in instructions and a link to join the class. Class registration ends 15 minutes before class start time. And when you complete the after-class survey, you’re automatically entered in a drawing to win a $50 gift certificate!

Driving Web Profits is an entry-level class, so no prior knowledge about Xtime is needed. Even if you’ve never taken a course with Xtime University before, Driving Web Profits can teach you to be more profitable right away!

FAQs

[Q.] I have an advisor out sick today. How do I make sure customers are still getting checked in quickly?

[A.] By adjusting your Capacities. If an advisor is out ill or on vacation and you manage shop capacity based on the number of appointments, cut back your capacity until the advisor returns. Likewise, if you’re managing using shop hours, you may want to trim that for the day too.

Or, another method is to leave your total “as is”, but lower the number of appointments that can be booked at a given interval. For example, if you have five advisors and usually permit five appointments at 9am, you may want to decrease that to four just for the day.

To change a capacity for the current day:
- In the main navigation bar, click Appointments.
- Click the Day View tab if it is not already displaying by default.
- Within the Capacities box, click the word Change to the right of the item you want to alter.
- Set the new capacity value(s).
- Be sure to click the Save button at the bottom of the screen if it is not visible.

[Q.] Can I adjust the duration of an appointment?

[A.] Yes. If you’re managing by shop hours, let’s say you schedule a job that you expect will take two hours, but it turns out to be more complicated than anticipated. To account for the additional time, on the Appointment Ledger Screen, go to Services, mouse down to the appointment you want to adjust and hover over it. You’ll see two choices: Adjust Duration or Carryover Appointment.

Carryovers are for vehicle work that’s going to stretch into the next day.

When you adjust appointments, the time is automatically deducted from the total shop capacity, which helps the shop from getting overbooked and gives an overall sense of how busy the shop is going to be that day. Capacities can also be set for advisor/tech teams if you have a large service department and use a team system.