



CAPRICORN
...it's just easier!™

Other resources in step 4f:

- No other resources

Untidiness equals poor productivity

There is a definite link between workshop tidiness and technician productivity.

It would be too easy to justify an untidy workshop by claiming that the busier it becomes, the more untidy it is likely to become simply because the staff would not have time to put things away.

That justification is far removed from the truth. Surveys of any number of workshops have shown that an untidy workshop is very unlikely to be staffed by highly productive technicians.

And it therefore is not surprising to find that the most efficiently run workshops with highly productive technicians are also the tidiest.

Untidiness is not a sign of being busy but rather a sign of being unorganised. Being unorganised is a trait that filters down from the owner to the staff and results in an untidy workshop. Most workshop owners in this category are quick to point the finger at the staff, but they need to point the finger at themselves.

Transpose this scenario to your accountant. Imagine walking into the accountant's office and seeing files everywhere, the bins overflowing and the photocopier half dismantled. Remember the feeling we had when first introduced to the small-town lawyer, Dennis Denuto in that classic Aussie movie, The Castle.

It was difficult to accept that untidy and disorganised Dennis would be able to do a great job and properly represent you in a court of law. He could create the impression of being flat out, when in reality, he was flat out going broke.

If technician productivity in your workshop is low and the workshop looks untidy, the time has come when a decision has to be made – is it possible to be efficient and therefore productive in this rubbish dump atmosphere?

The workshop is a reflection of the owner or the manager, so it follows that any change or improvement must come from the owner or manager.

If the owner can't put the tools away and keep the workspace tidy, the staff can hardly be expected to do any better.

Here are some simple steps that can help transform a workshop from a disorganised mess to a highly productive and profitable business:

- 1) Throw out unnecessary junk – if the owner or manager pitches in for a major spring clean, it sends a message to staff that they are serious about making some changes. The clean-up should also include, for emphasis, any personal belongings that really shouldn't be in the workshop.
- 2) Get rid of dead cars – the more space there is, the more cars seem to live permanently in those spaces. Old jobs that linger usually end up costing the business money. Think of the time wasted just pushing them in and out each day. Franchises and dealerships focus on jobs they can turn over quickly, for a very good reason.
- 3) Keep customers off the workshop floor – this can be a real challenge, especially in rural areas, but every time a customer interrupts a technician they are impacting on productivity. Put up clear signage and create a pathway that directs customers to the office. Insurance requirements can be a good excuse for encouraging customers to stay out of the workshop.
- 4) Equipment maintenance and updating – cars have to be serviced regularly, and so does workshop equipment. Preventative maintenance is the best way to reduce expensive equipment breakdowns. Every piece of out-of-order equipment is affecting the workshop's productivity. Allocate this responsibility to staff. Develop a diary of what equipment needs to be serviced or updated on what date and assign responsibility for that equipment to a staff member and make sure they sign off that the service was done on some kind of equipment log book.

- 5) Damaged equipment log book – there is nothing more frustrating than preparing to start a job to find the equipment you need is out of action. In addition to preventative maintenance staff must be instructed to report and document damaged equipment in a log book so that repairs or replacement can be organised quickly.
- 6) Cleaning roster – this is a regular routine that is everyone's responsibility. The routine can be organised by drawing up a cleaning roster that must be signed off. There's always the option of engaging professional cleaners if the budget allows.
- 7) Tidiness is a technician responsibility – putting tools away is as much a responsible part of a technician's job as an ability to fix a car. Write workshop tidiness into a technician's workshop agreement and declare it as a key performance task. If the situation is really desperate, think about linking tidiness into a staff incentive program. Whatever system you choose, tidiness must become a habit.
- 8) Ensure that every tool or piece of equipment has a documented home – time wasted looking for tools is productive time wasted and money thrown out the window. Document where every bit of equipment and every tool lives and then display it clearly and get agreement from everyone. This can be done as a side project by an apprentice during a little down time.
- 9) Stock returns procedure – don't waste productive time and money chasing credit notes from suppliers. Install a system that puts the responsibility back on the supplier. Set up a supplier returns log book that requires the supplier to sign for returned parts and provide credit note numbers. If they fail to comply, there are other suppliers who will.

The challenge is to put systems in place to ensure that everyone plays their part in keeping the workshop neat, tidy and organised. Make workshop presentation a true reflection of the quality of the shop's workmanship and watch productivity and efficiency improve.

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

Just go for it!