



CAPRICORN

...it's just easier!™

Other resources in step 6f:

- In this short video Jeff Smit explains why you should charge a data fee and how it can make your job easier

Data fees

The solid and complex data required these days to fix the modern motor vehicle costs money, so who is supposed to pay for it? Is it absorbed into the workshop's running costs, or is it added to the customer's bill?

There are those who would say 'Well, I never charged the customer for using my shifting spanner or screwdriver, so what's the difference?'

It could be argued that the advent of the modern engine and the technology revolution has changed the repair and maintenance landscape so radically, that workshops can no longer just absorb everything under the general heading of 'tools of trade'.

It is now becoming widely accepted that to maintain profitability, it is reasonable to place essentials like vehicle data, scan tools and oscilloscopes in the same category of other business consumables like filters and oil.

Engine management issues demand the use of scan tools, and apart from their purchase price, updates are regularly required, so there is an on-going cost to the business.

The industry and car owners have now widely accepted scan tool or special test equipment fees as a customer charge-out item. The same principle applies to data and specialist information.

Engine management jobs typically need wiring diagrams, as well as diagnostic information and often, access to a network, like TaT, where information is shared.

The workshop owner is paying out good money for wiring diagrams and even membership of networks that can help with diagnostic information.

Added together, it can cost a great deal of money over a year.

Many workshops are already charging data or information fees and feedback from most of them reveals almost no complaint from customers, provided the charge is explained properly and professionally.

At all stages in the diagnostic process, communication with the customer is vital. This is for two good reasons – there remains in the minds of many motorists a perception that fixing modern vehicles is now so easy. Just plug in the scan tool and it tells you what to fix. The customer needs to understand that diagnosing a vehicle is as complex as diagnosing a rare disease in a person, even to the point that at times, a specialist may have to be called in. The second good reason is that when customers are kept informed of the diagnostic steps, they begin to understand the value of the workshop's knowledge and expertise, and therefore less likely to quibble over the bill.

Customers will readily understand that if data or other technical information is required, the workshop will have to pay for it and the cost will be passed on.

Each workshop will have to determine the level of charge for data, but it is usually in the range of \$15 to \$45.

Where a data fee is applied, it's always a good idea to show the customer what they have purchased – a wiring diagram or a repair process.

Highlight the offending wiring with colour markers or make notes on information acquired through a data provider or network and offer these to the customer. Most will decline because it will mean little to them, so keep the data, or a copy of it, on the customer's file.

It's the equivalent of showing worn parts to the customer if they have to be replaced.

Following these policies, complaints about invoices should be very few. Indeed the workshop will win the trust of customers for the professional way you conduct your business, and they are more likely to tell their friends about it.

The margins made on data and information should be treated like any other consumable in the workshop and that way, when new data or information becomes available, the expense can be easily justified.

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

Just go for it!