

The Integrated Tire Shop

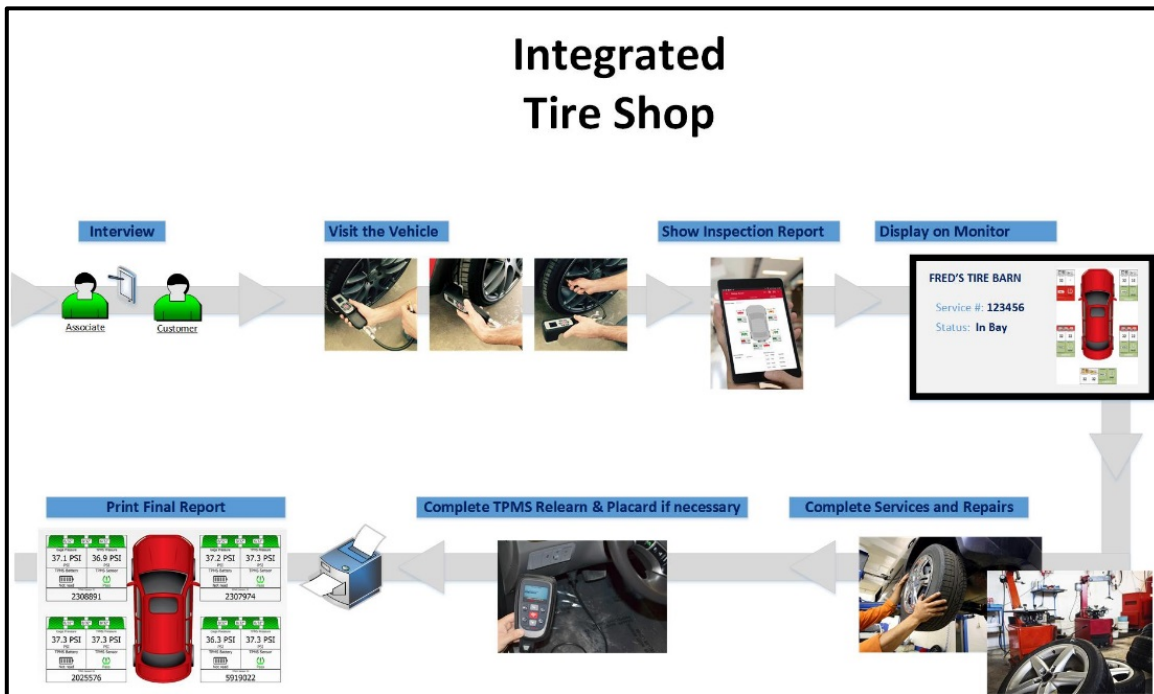
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Over the recent decade, the average tire shop has undergone a significant transformation in technology. It wasn't all that long ago that the most complex and "technical" piece of equipment in the tire shop was that "new-fangled" high speed balancer. With the advent of Low Profile/Run Flat Tires, Tire Pressure Monitoring Systems, and digitally controlled steering, alignment and suspensions, the need for high tech tools and equipment has steadily increased. Along with this new equipment is a huge need for connection between the tool, the technician and the consumer.

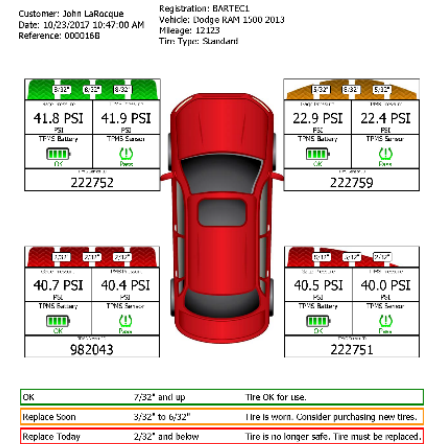
Enter the integrated tire shop. If your new tools and equipment feature wireless capabilities like Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, then there's a chance they can be controlled and managed using advanced software applications. Using the latest in Point of Sale [POS] applications that are web application driven along with the same type of application formats for the tool management, today's tire shop can streamline their entire operation and better yet, provide the right information to their customers.

Imagine using a single point of access, whether it be a workstation on the counter or a handheld device that links customer information, already gathered, to the various actions performed by the tools during inspection, diagnostics and repair. Not only is the use of the tool more efficient, but the building a historical data file for your customer's vehicle is fast, easy and accurate!



Let's look at a sample of an integrated tire shop. In the diagram shown, this shop has a Web Application Based Point of Sale System, Front Counter Associates outfitted with tablets and tire inspection tools, a monitor in the waiting area, Wi-Fi throughout the shop and a TPMS Scan tool in the back shop.

The process begins with the customer interview. With the customer's info already in the POS, the vehicle's Make, Model, and Year are sent to the tire inspection tool via Bluetooth. There are no redundant steps like setting up the tool or scanning a barcode. With the tool set, the associate can quickly gather remaining tread depth, tire pressure and TPMS sensor status from each wheel. The tablet camera is used for recording any visible defects like sidewall or sensor damage. With the inspection complete, the data is captured and sent to the POS, where it can be readily shared with the consumer. Color reports like the one shown are very effective in educating and informing the customer of the exact condition of their vehicle's tires, wheels and sensors. Showing customers facts and figures also takes any subjectivity out of the sales process.



SERVICE TIP: By recording remaining tire tread and mileage at every customer visit, it is now possible to build a predictive service model. Use Social Media add-ons in the POS to communicate with customers when it's time for new tires, BEFORE it happens!

Once the inspection is complete and a service number is assigned, the back shop tools can now use the same information as work continues on the vehicle. The Integrated Tire Shop system allows back shop tools to select a job from a list. The active jobs can even be displayed on the shop monitor if so equipped. If the tool is connected to the system via a wireless access point, simply bring up the active job list and select the one being worked on. The advantages to this system are many. First, it's more efficient to access a job from a current list, as opposed to scanning the VIN again. This method is more accurate as well. By limiting the chances for operator error while setting up a tool, selecting the job from the active list is less prone to a mistake. Finally, using the same record that began with the vehicle inspection means the technician can build a complete service report from start to finish. Once all the necessary diagnostics and repairs are complete, the final report can be printed and attached to the invoice.

The Integrated Tire Shop is an emerging technology that will no doubt help tire shops of all sizes improve their operation and increase sales opportunities. As more tools make use of wireless technology, the more opportunity for process integration there will be.

