

Avis Rent A Car Partners with Delmar to Create a Revolutionary Technician Training Program

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Tom Tittman,
Technical Support
Manager
Avis



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The Training Challenge

The automotive industry – like most others in the 21st century – is experiencing the introduction of new technologies at an alarming rate. Compared to their predecessors, today's vehicles are now equipped with complex systems including disc brakes, ABS, active suspensions, and variable speed steering, with experts estimating that the car of the very near future will be comprised of 40 percent electronics. At the same time the industry is experiencing a severe shortage of experienced technicians and new government mandates for fuel economy, lower emissions and safer vehicles. In light of these sweeping changes in the industry, it has become imperative for automotive companies to commit to a renewed focus on the development, execution, and measurement of their certification and training programs.

Avis Rent A Car System, Inc. is one company that took this challenge seriously. Faced with the lack of fully-trained technicians, new technologies, government mandates, and a geographically dispersed workforce in an industry known for high staff turnover, Avis needed to decide how to best educate and train their entry-level automotive technicians in order to “grow their own” skilled technicians.

The Avis fleet includes more than 200,000 General Motors vehicles. Nearly 60,000 Avis vehicles receive preventive maintenance each month, totaling more than 700,000 services per year. And that is just scheduled maintenance; add to that any unexpected repairs and maintaining such an enormous fleet can be a daunting challenge. In 2002, Cendant (corporate owner of Avis) bought most of the assets of Budget Group, Inc., which will increase the Cendant Car Rental Group's current fleet by approximately 33 percent, as well as expand its product lines to include Ford vehicles. With these impending changes, Avis required a program that made training cost and time effective, as well as produced higher levels of learning and technician retention.

The Delmar Solution

Avis turned to Delmar, a part of Cengage Learning, to help build an efficient and flexible basic-skills training program designed to meet the business objective of standardizing and ensuring consistent delivery of training information to all employees.



Training that works!



After reviewing materials from OEMs and several vendors, Avis' training department developed a training "blueprint" called the Fundamental Skills Program that could be rolled out to all Avis facilities. This training program is different from what Avis had done in the past. Instead of simply focusing on preparing novice automotive technicians for the ASE certification tests, the training focuses on identifying, teaching, and reinforcing the basic skills automotive technicians need to be successful in their jobs. By mastering these basic skills, the technician is confident and prepared to pass the ASE test.

Blended Learning

In partnership with Avis, Delmar examined the company's goals and proposed a solution to meet those needs. The Fundamental Skills Program would include OEM resources and a variety of training materials from Delmar including a textbook and technician manual, customized NATEF job sheets, and TechnicianTestPrep.com, an online ASE test preparation course.

TechnicianTestPrep.com provides both the content technicians need to pass the ASE exam, and a complete testing resource area including practice, sample, and timed tests. An Avis technician can go to the course web site for an initial knowledge assessment to gauge his or her strengths and weaknesses in a particular area. Upon completion of the assessment, the technician receives a personal training package with a complete set of instructions on how to use the online course, textbook, and tech manual. The site aims to reduce time spent on skills already mastered while enabling the technician to identify areas of weakness. With the Fundamental Skills

Program, Avis technicians have a well-defined, individualized learning program designed to help them develop and update the skills required for their job.

TechnicianTestPrep.com also makes the administrative side of training technicians much easier. The site includes built-in reporting features to collect data on technician scores, time spent training, progress, averages, and comparative averages across a group of users. All of this data can be reported to the technician, trainers, regional training directors, and system-wide administrators. Trainers can use these reports to determine what areas of the curriculum need to be revised and updated.

The Delmar materials work in conjunction with model-specific information provided by the OEMs, as well as one-on-one mentoring from a member of Avis' Technician Advisory Council. Together Avis and Delmar have created a blueprint for how to build a successful training program that can drive employee and customer satisfaction, technician retention rates, and financial rewards.

"We see Delmar as a true partner in developing technician training programs," said Tom Tittmann, technical support manager at Avis. "They understand our challenges and ask for feedback on their products and services. We work together to enhance training materials and to develop solutions that meet our needs. Delmar has demonstrated an unmatched ability to grow as the industry grows. They seek out customer input and measure the effectiveness of their materials to insure that they are developing the best possible products and services."





Results That Count

Retention

The addition of the Fundamental Skills initiative that incorporates Delmar's training products and services to Avis' comprehensive technician training standards program (started in 1990) has enabled Avis to retain the technicians it invests in. Compared to the industry turnover rate of 30 percent, Avis currently loses only two percent of their technicians each year and often this is due to retirement.

Empowered Employees

The high level of skills and training of Avis technicians has led to a strategic partnership with GM whereby technicians and engineers regularly share problems to generate best practices and solutions. This level of involvement brings empowerment and respect to the technicians and helps them to know they are providing top quality feedback to the OEM.

Avis focuses on involving the technicians in the business and giving them the tools and training they need to do their job. This focus has resulted in confident, satisfied employees who truly feel valued by their employer.

"Every week a technician tells me how he or she has benefited from the training Avis offers," said Bill Bartlett, manager of Avis' St. Louis office. "They view the training program as part of the benefit package – just like health insurance or a 401(k). The advances in our field are coming so quickly; the technicians truly value our dedication to helping them keep up with the changes. They understand and appreciate that although we are making an investment in our company, we are also making an investment in their future."

Profitability & Customer Satisfaction

In addition to satisfied, empowered employees, Avis has also reaped financial rewards from the training program through faster repair times, fewer repeat problems, and satisfied customers. In an industry where even small improvements in repair work can mean considerable cost savings, Avis' training program has proved invaluable. Because Avis technicians have the knowledge and tools to do their job, the company does not have to worry about a vehicle being unavailable to a potential renter because of a warranty repair or lengthy mechanical problem. Vehicles coming in for routine maintenance or to fix small problems are thoroughly checked to verify the entire system is working properly. In this way, Avis ensures that its vehicles are fixed right the first time and customers have fewer breakdowns on the road. This "try harder" attitude is building brand loyalty and repeat business by ensuring satisfied employees and customers.

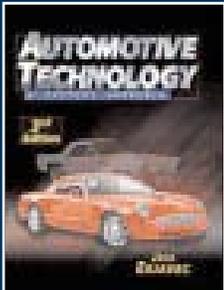
ASE Certification

Although it has not been the sole focus of the training program, Avis technicians are much more likely to be ASE certified than their counterparts at other companies. The tests are no cinch to pass; approximately one out of every three test-takers fails. As of November 2002, 94 percent of Avis "A" technicians are ASE certified in one or more areas, compared to the national average of 45 percent. Of those 94 percent, 51 percent of Avis' "A" technicians are ASE Master Automobile Technicians, meaning they have passed all eight of the basic automotive ASE tests, while the national average is only 30 percent. This type of nationally recognized training benefits consumers. An ASE certification is a valuable way by which to measure

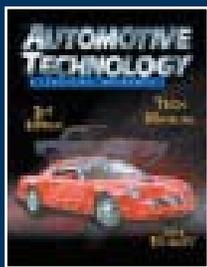
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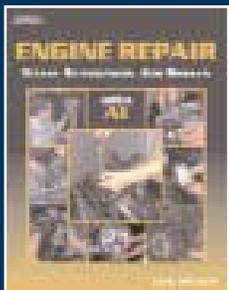
Avis implemented a blended learning solution comprised of the following Delmar products:



Auto Technology by Jack Erjavec
ISBN: 0766806731



Tech Manual
ISBN: 076680674X



NATEF Job Sheets
ISBN: 766863751 (Set)



www.TechnicianTestPrep.com

the knowledge and skills of an individual technician, as well as the commitment to quality of the repair facility.

By working with Delmar to integrate its materials into the Fundamental Skills Training Program, Avis has improved customer service, enhanced employee productivity, achieved quality and consistency of repairs, and expanded its business by building credibility through industry recognized certification programs. This kind of achievement is a win for everyone – the technicians, the company, and its customers.

Cengage Learning's Suite of Products Includes:



Chilton has been providing quality automotive repair information for over 80 years. Visit www.chiltonsonline for more information.



ASE Test Preparation materials help technicians increase their success on the certification exams. Study materials are available for the Automotive*, Medium/Heavy Duty Truck, Collision Repair*, Engine Machinist, School Bus, Transit Bus, and Truck Equipment exams. Material is available both in print and online. *Also available in Spanish.

Visit www.trainingbay.cengage.com/ase_prep/index.aspx for more information.



Comprehensive Skill Assessment Tool helps prove a return on investment for training. Visit www.skillanalysis.com for more information.



Professional Automotive Technician Training Series - Computer and web-based training products help technicians improve their skills.

Visit www.techniciantraining.com for more information.

For more information on Cengage Learning's comprehensive education, training, & information solutions visit www.trainingbay.com or call **(800) 998-7498 X2691**.