

e-advantage



Tips for Managing Service Trucks

The service vehicle is essentially a heavy-duty A/C shop on wheels. Managed right, a well-stocked truck can generate substantial revenue and be a competitive advantage.

NVB Equipment in Fresno, Calif., has 10 service trucks covering the entire state of California. More than 65% of the company's revenue comes from field service.

"Each vehicle carries \$30,000 to \$45,000 worth of inventory and has all the tools for just about any A/C job," says NVB's Mike Oddo, "whether it's emergency service in the middle of nowhere or a system hose-up and charge at an OE." He offers these tips for keeping field service trucks productive and profitable:

TIP 1: Bigger isn't always better

NVB's vehicles are medium-duty Peterbilt and Kenworth trucks. Rated at 26,000 lbs. GVW, they're big enough to handle tools and inventory but just below the threshold where the technician needs a CDL. "A bigger truck gives you more options with body size, but it's more involved in terms of licensing, maintenance, and operations," Mike says. "You have to balance size with added complexity and cost."

TIP 2: One truck, one technician

NVB assigns one technician to each truck. He's responsible for managing its tools and inventory, and functions as his own service writer. "When you slip-seat, you have keep the trucks absolutely uniform when it comes to organization and stocking levels," Mike says. "We'd rather make one person accountable and keep it simple."

TIP 3: Spec for power and water

Powering welders, air compressors, recovery machines, lights, and other equipment in the field is a challenge in California where emissions from idling and APUs are tightly controlled. "We power everything through inverters and isolated deep-cycle batteries," says Mike. Another key spec: water tanks and electric pumps. If the technician



NVB's 10 trucks service all of California.

has to wash out an evaporator coil or a condenser, he can do it without an external water source.

TIP 4: Digitize

"We live by iPhones and Google Docs," says Mike. "We take every opportunity to communicate digitally and eliminate handwriting. There are great fleet management programs out there, but for us, the reliability and simplicity of the iPhone plus the ability to share documents online makes it easier to manage a mobile operation."

Put E-Z Clip on the Truck

Time and fuel are expensive, so eliminate out-of-route trips by stocking your field service trucks with our AeroQuip E-Z Clip Starter Kit (70R9903). It has everything you need to make hose assemblies in the field, including 50 feet of each hose size, hose-cutting and connection tools, and a carrying case.

Red Dot News

Find Parts Online

Do you know your customer's truck make and model? Go to the On-Highway Applications section of our web site and find the part you need without having to log in. Organized by OEM, each item includes a photo, description, OEM part number, and Red Dot part number. See our complete offering of all-makes HVAC parts for any truck in a fleet.

Hot Movers

Our "hot movers" flyers show the top parts for each make of truck—a great reference for countermen and customers. Log in at RedDotCorp.com and click on "Literature" to download the flyer you need.

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AT RED DOT

3D Printing Speeds Product Development

Red Dot has 100,000 square feet of manufacturing space at our Seattle headquarters, but one of the most exciting pieces of production equipment is about the size of a bookcase.

It's a Stratasys Fortus 400mc 3D printer, a machine that turns 3D engineering drawings into working prototypes made of production-grade plastic. Red Dot's investment has reduced product development time and costs.

"We use the machine for prototyping molded plastic components," says Gary Hansen, Red Dot vice president. "Overnight, it can deliver a functional part with nearly same strength and physical properties as the final product, one we can test and put in the field."

One example is a blower-motor wheel, a complex design that would require 12 weeks and thousands of dollars to create a prototype. "Now we can design a wheel and be holding it in our hands within 24 hours, at a cost of a few hundred dollars for materials," Gary says. "Better still, we can improve the design quickly and cost-effectively."

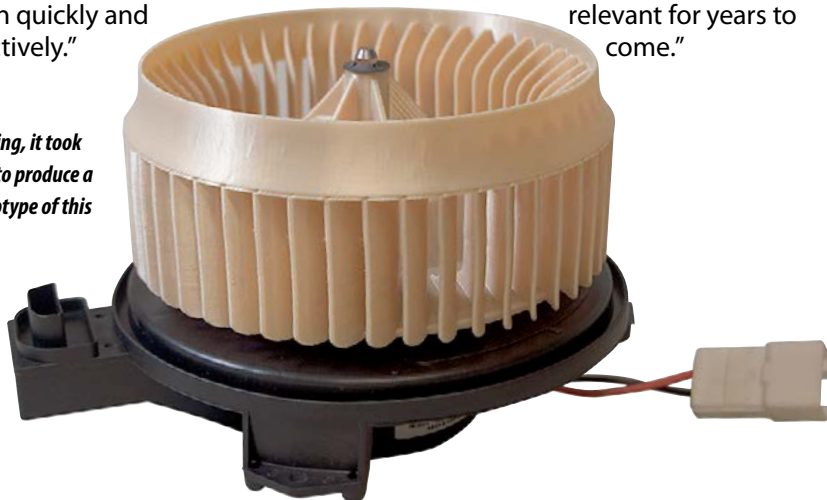
Previously, Red Dot outsourced 3D printing, a process that can take days or weeks. "We were spending well over \$100,000 a year for a service bureau," says Gary. "From a return on investment standpoint, it was a pretty straightforward decision to invest in this type of production system."

Red Dot uses the machine for applications beyond prototyping components. For example, we can quickly and accurately make jigs and checking-fixtures used in manufacturing.

There are limitations, Gary says. The materials don't always have the same properties or durability as a molded part. Also, you're constrained somewhat by the physical size of what your machine can produce.

"Our ability to accelerate the product-development cycle and reduce costs is such a huge advantage," Gary says. "It's a huge leap forward, and advancements in materials, including new types of plastics with various physical properties, will keep the machine relevant for years to come."

With 3D printing, it took just 24 hours to produce a working prototype of this blower wheel.



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All times are in the Pacific Time Zone

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