

## How can I provide the right tool storage solutions for my customers?



**By Phil Sasso  
Contributing Editor**

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To sell more tool storage accessories and equipment, consider hands-on displays for the truck.



*The Homak 60" Stainless Steel Top Rolling Cabinet.*

**Q.**

Is it true that customers who buy a toolbox from me will likely fill it with more tools from me? If so, what can I do to sell more toolboxes?

**A.**

That's a myth. I don't think a customer will feel driven to buy "brand X" of tools because he has a "brand X" toolbox. But I do believe he'll buy most of his tools from you because he trusts you. If he purchases a big-ticket item like a toolbox from you, he'll trust you enough to make his day-to-day purchases from you. So, increasing your toolbox sales isn't a lock-in for future tool sales, but it's a good start.

"Having a toolbox on your truck is key," says Mac Tools Marketing Director Robert Holmes. Toolboxes are often bought on impulse. Even the best literature and videos can't create the kind of impulse that touch and feel can, says Holmes.



*Keeping a toolbox on the truck allows customers a chance to get hands-on with the product.*

"There is something about opening a drawer of a new toolbox that makes a technician get excited," Holmes says. Taking the time to load the top drawers with sockets on organizers, wrenches on racks, and tools in trays will help make the toolbox more attractive while increasing accessory sales.

"Keep toolboxes 'brand-new' clean," encourages Chris Cremer, product manager at Matco Tools. "Avoid storing inventory in your toolbox – no one wants to buy a brand new toolbox that was used to store tools bouncing around on the road."

Showcase your toolbox to demonstrate features and benefits like drawer capacity, frame construction and caster capacity, says John G. Stanko, marketing manager at Homak Manufacturing LLC.

I agree. Put tools and organizers in the box, but think display, not inventory storage.

The best way to show off a toolbox is near the top step of your truck so your customers see it as soon as they set foot on your truck, says Extreme Tools president Larry Grela. That way, the light from the doorway hits the toolbox the minute they open the door. Bright overhead lighting will also accentuate the new box. Grela favors choosing bright, bold colors

that will draw your customer's eye.

"Keep things fresh," says Matco Tools' Cremer. If a box has been sitting for a few weeks, swap it out with another

one. Rotating the toolbox on display also showcases the wide variety of options you offer. Although having a box on your truck is important, you obviously can't carry every box you sell.

"People want a toolbox that reflects their individuality and style," says Cremer.

That's where a toolbox configurator can come in handy, says Mac Tools' Holmes. A configurator is software or a web-based tool that allows a customer to design his own box, choosing color, pull design, layout and more. In the end, the customer also can get a virtual image of their box before their made-to-order toolbox is even started.

A configurator is a much more interactive selling tool than a simple brochure. Ask your flag or toolbox manufacturer about a configurator. Most have one.

When it comes to dollars and cents, the consensus is that a good financing program is also essential to increasing your toolbox sales. If you're with a flag, take the time to get to know the financing plan inside-out. If you're an independent, Extreme Tools' Grela suggests looking into a resource like [leasestation.com](http://leasestation.com).

And remember when one customer buys a toolbox it can inspire others to take



## SALES Q & A

the leap. Take a quick photo of your customer and his new box with your smartphone camera. Post it on your truck and on your social media sites.

**Q.** Most of my customers aren't in the market for toolboxes. What are other storage items can I sell?

**A.** First, don't assume your customer isn't in the market for a toolbox just because they don't ask. As Holmes said, toolboxes are often an impulse purchase. Who knows when the impulse will strike? Consider this: one dealer jots down a trade-in allowance on a sticky note and puts it on his customer's old toolbox. It stimulates "trading-up thinking."

Try a "Tool Storage Month" promotion in spring and/or fall. Push "spring cleaning" and remind customers that an organized tech is a productive tech.

"Organizing tools helps technicians locate each tool needed for each job in a timely manner," says Julie Thielbar, executive vice president at Hansen Global. Tool organization also helps quickly identify missing tools and can save a tech from having an expensive tool "drive away" under a customer's hood. No one wants to find tools missing at the end of the workday.



One toolbox trend is to integrate outlets into the toolbox instead of it being an afterthought or add-on.

"Ask your customers what they wish their current tool storage system had," says Matco Tools' Cremer. Focus on mobility, customization, work surface and security. Ask about challenges, then focus on solutions. What do they need? A top chest? A side cabinet? A power strip? A hutch? Lighting?

Also consider selling upgraded drawer liners, a top hutch, worklights, a top chest and side locker cabinets, says Extreme Tools' Grela. Some items I hadn't considered that Grela suggested include stainless steel tops, toolbox covers and replacement heavy duty spring loaded casters.

"You can consider things like pliers and wrench racks, socket organizers, magnetic socket rails, tote trays, drawer organizer trays," says Holmes. "But the real sales come from helping your customers evolve their box to fit their needs."

"Selling add-on side cabinets or hutches (are) a great way to enable a technician to continue to receive the benefit of a box as their needs grow," continues Holmes. "Adding a top box to an existing roller cabinet can provide a great amount of additional storage."

Manufacturers like Extreme Tools are developing power tool docking stations and built-in power strips to meet a growing demand, says Grela. The trend is to integrate outlets into the toolbox instead of it being an afterthought or add-on.

Power integration is especially growing as the use of cordless and rechargeable power tools increase in the service bay, says Cremer. This is an invaluable feature to sell.

"We have seen a recent trend in non-mobile tool storage that allows carts to be used on the floor as stationary boxes against the wall," says Homak's Stanko. "This setup is utilized to keep a clear sight-line of the shop." ■

What kind of trends are you seeing with tool carts? Find the answer online, visit: [VehicleServicePros.com/11527312](http://VehicleServicePros.com/11527312)

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