



BY PHIL SASSO,
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Phil Sasso is president of Sasso Marketing Inc. (sassomarketing.com), a technical marketing agency specializing in tools and equipment. Subscribe to his free marketing tips at philsasso.com/blog

Making product training work for you

What does technology-plus-education equal?

It's "back to school" time! Not just for students, but for your customers, too.

Some dealers believe technical products, like scanners and scopes, are best sold with technical training. They're proponents of "tool schools" lead by professional trainers who know their products inside-out.

I like the energy of face-to-face contact. But some industry leaders have different ideas on how to present technical information in the Internet age.

Read on to decide what may be the best method for you.

co-owner and trainer Bill Peek says that top drivability guys are replacing scan tools in as little as six years. That can make for a big learning curve and is one reason product demos tend to be very popular among drivability techs.

The most successful trainers are those doing actual training and not a sales pitch, says Mac Tools district manager Jim Holtz of West Valley, N.Y., who has had a lot of success with product training events in his district.

Be sure your invite answers the four "W"s: Who, What, Where and When. This flyer could use an address.



Presents an evening of diagnostics training with

Tech Reps:
STEVE ZACK
BOB KLEIN

Products that will be covered:

- Mac Mentor Touch
- Mac A/C equip. – AC34788 & AC34288

Where: LEWIS AUTO

When: TUES AUG 19th @ 6pm (refreshments upon arrival)

FREE to all Shop Owners, Technicians, Mechanics & DIY Customers
Please RSVP with your distributor.

Q. Don't my customers know everything they should about the scan tool they use every day?

A. You'd think so. But I don't know everything about the tools I use every day. I'm always learning some new trick on my MacBook or web browser. And my decade-old universal TV remote does one thing: turn on my TV – not very universal. Perhaps you can identify.

The same is true for your customer. They may use a tool every day, but don't use or realize all the features on their scanner or scope. However, good product training also shows the technician what his current tool *doesn't* do. Creating a bit of "tool envy" helps sell tools.

Scan tools are evolving at lightspeed. MPC Publishing

Q. Isn't putting together an event a lot of work?

A. The first one can be a lot of work. But once you have a system, it gets easier, says Holtz.

One key is to not sweat the small stuff.

Originally Holtz worked hard on trying to get his dealers to agree on a date. Then he realized that he was wasting a lot of time and he never got a consensus. So, he decided to just choose a date and let the chips fall where they may. He hasn't sweated that detail again since.

Holtz usually alternates locations from one end of his territory to the other. He finds the furthest the average tech will travel for a training event has been about 45 minutes. So promote your event in about an hour radius of your venue to allow for the rare exception.

Q. Where should I hold the event? How much should I expect it to cost?

A. Holtz says he also has been fortunate to find good locations for his events.

Often he gets free use of a community college automotive classroom and bay. The instructor is usually very happy to open up his facilities and sit in on the training. The classroom/bay set-up provides the perfect learning environment.

If he can't get a college classroom, he'll ask to use a larger customer's shop. They usually have a pizza party in the waiting room and use the bay area for training. The upside of this arrangement is he gets nearly all of the technicians from that shop to attend this event.

Holtz says the event costs him about \$100 for pizzas and

Go online for more info

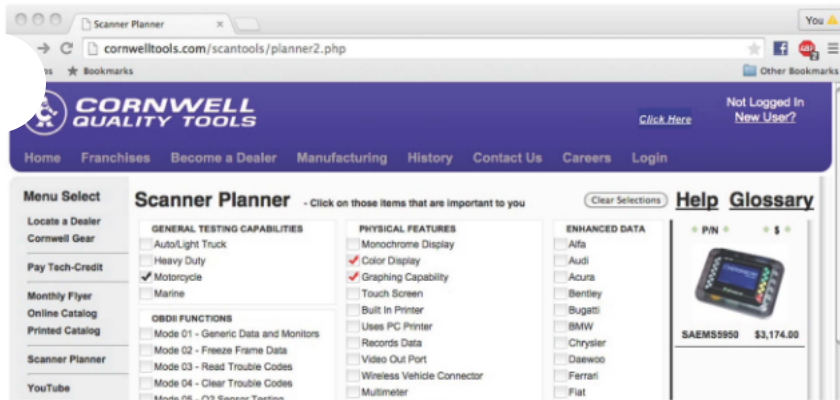
Sasso answers the following additional questions:

- My DM doesn't hold after-hours product training. What do you suggest?
- What if product training doesn't work for me?

Next month:

A primer on reflashing/reprogramming tools.





The Scanner Planner shows that Cornwell carries one model of motorcycle scanner and it has a Color Display and Graphing Capability. To access the Cornwell Scanner Planner, visit <http://cornwelltools.com/scantools/planner2.php>.

drinks. He finds it's well worth it when he adds up the sales generated by a training event.

So, if your DM is doing all this hard work, all you need to do is invite your customers. That seems easy.

Q. What can I do to get as many techs as I can to attend the event?

A. "If you feed them, they will come."

Just kidding. I wish it was that easy. Although food is a must-have at an after-work event, it's not the main draw. If you want your customers to carve time out of their busy lives for your event, you need to promise valuable, relevant information. Focus on driveability guys for scan tool and diagnostic demos. And try to make the event both educational and fun.

How do you make technical training fun? Take a page from Tupperware. Don't think of it as product demos, think of it as a party. It's a chance for techs to meet other techs and relax. Keep the event loose, but keep things moving.

Try holding a drawing to add to the party vibe. If it's a district event, ask the flag to ante up a few prizes like gift cards or logoed apparel. Mention "door prizes" on your invite flyer, but don't expect that to be the major draw any more than food is.

Speaking of invitations be sure to invite everyone on your route. Hand out invites to the appropriate customers and encourage them to bring a co-worker. Post the flyer on your truck bulletin

board. Look into Facebook's event invitation tool. Be sure you cover all the important information – including addresses and phone numbers. Ask someone to double check for you. It can be easy to overlook details. (I forgot the church address on my wedding invite 17 years ago. It's a wonder anyone showed up!)

Start promoting early and keep reminding everyone – even after they've registered. (And be sure they RSVP so you know how many to plan for on the food and seating.)

Let your excitement about the event be contagious. If your event is fun and informative (not one long infomercial), the word will get around and next time more customers and prospects may come.

Q. Should I take orders at the event?

A. Holtz says most of his dealers don't take orders at his events. But that doesn't mean you can't. I think you can close more deals if you promote a limited-time special pricing or promotional package designed especially as an event tie-in.

Obviously, have brochures or printouts on every product you demonstrate. Include the information on your specials, and make the end date of any specials big and bold.

Just remember the key to success is in the follow-up. Ask for the order several times over the next several weeks. And if you've created a special on the product remind them that the discount deadline is looming.

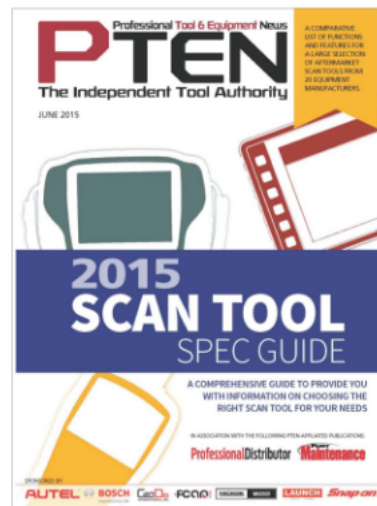
Q. How can I be sure I'm recommending the right diagnostic tool for my customer?

A. You're asking the wrong question! Remember we're talking about educating customers. You should be asking: How can I give my customer the information he needs to pick the right scan tool on his own? You shouldn't be picking, he should.

Educating your customer gives him the resources to make an informed decision. (And if he makes his own decision, he can't blame you if he doesn't like his choice!) But in the Internet age, educating doesn't just happen in a classroom or training video.

Cornwell has a free online "Scanner Planner" to inform their dealers and customers on scan tool features. By clicking any of about 100 check boxes, a Cornwell customer can choose the scanner with the exact features he wants or determine all the features on a scanner he's considering.

"I built the Scanner Planner after realizing I was getting asked the same questions over and over," says Russell. So he gathered some of the most common feature questions and put the answers at his dealers' and customers' fingertips. **PD**



For a comparison of different scan tool options, download the 2015 PTEN Scan Tool Spec Guide: VehicleServicePros.com/12081118