



NUTS AND BOLTS OF OFFERING TOTAL CAR CARE TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

By Jim Baumer

Next to purchasing a home, the acquisition and ongoing maintenance of a vehicle is likely the next largest expense in most people's monthly budget. Depending on an owner's choice of vehicle, that cost can consume up to half of their take-home pay or more. And while technology and the Internet of Things have impacted vehicles in many ways, cars still can't fix themselves.

With the proliferation of quick lube in the 1980s and 1990s, getting your oil changed and performing routine maintenance is easier than ever. At the same time, some operators are reconsidering not offering more than the basic oil change, air filters or wiper replacement. They're asking whether or not it makes more sense to provide soup-to-nuts car care for their customers. If so, does simply adding services to your operation translate to better car counts?

If you've been considering ways to up the ante at your shop, two owner/operators who've made the jump to total car care offer ideas and a way forward.

Walker Tire/Quick Nick's in Lincoln, Nebraska

Nick Vuko is president of Walker Tire and Quick Nick's in Lincoln, Nebraska. Walker Tire began as a tire store, opened a quick lube and now has transitioned into total car care.

"About five years ago, we were doing the smaller repairs at Walker Tire, when people came in for an oil change at Quick Nick's," Vuko said. "If we found a problem, we'd set them up at Walker Tire (the two stores are next to one another)."

But Vuko was concerned that they still

had to send people away to other places for things they weren't doing at Walker Tire.

Vuko started by making investments in new equipment at their main store and in their other fast lube stores (they have four locations in greater-Lincoln).

"I bought a Hunter Hawkeye Alignment machine. We added some additional lifts," Vuko said, adding that he likes the Blazer 9000 lift from Devon. "Being able to properly reset the stability control is important in doing reliable alignment work — the Hunter Hawkeye really helps the technician in 'lining up the car,' as well as adjusting the camber and toe correctly on the vehicle."

But simply adding services to your fast lube thinking it will be a silver bullet is a mistake, Vuko warned. There are a number of other variables. Even then, navigating the fine line between speed, convenience and offering those additional services that fall under total car care for your customers often requires the skill and nimbleness of an athlete walking a high-wire.

"One of my biggest challenges with Quick Nick's is keeping my bay times manageable, while offering additional services," he said. "If I bottle-neck my bays, I've lost any benefit that comes with offering more."

Vuko is banking on customers appreciat-