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TECHNOLOGY

Gorilla Safety releases Enterprise Bundle for large fleets

Jun 21, 2018



Gorilla Safety has unveiled its latest package to address a range of fleet needs, including dynamic daily vehicle inspection report, dynamic log view, advanced driver tools and advanced management tools.

The Enterprise Bundle is in part a response to the ELD mandate, as owners and operators of large companies note challenges meeting their bottom line. And not only does this assist their day-to-day tasks, but it benefits mechanics and drivers as well, the company noted.

The dynamic daily vehicle inspection report allows for personalization of equipment instruction requirements specific to their business, so administrators can closely monitor equipment. The dynamic log view gives customers control over the logbook, such as history and documented violations, for accurate representation of individual groups within their fleet.

With the advanced driver tools, professionals have two more functions typically required in bigger trucking companies. These extended capabilities alert drivers of upcoming

load security checks following 50 miles and 150 miles of driving. It also allows the driver to fix potential mistakes in personal conveyance and yard moves to ensure accuracy in drive time logs, according to the company.

Gorilla Safety's platform includes allocation and instruction of undisclosed drive time, with updated location services and archived statistical information.

“We are constantly striving to enhance our award-winning solution to better meet fleets’ evolving needs,” said co-founder and chief executive Mark Walton. “In the midst of recent, dramatic changes within our industry due to the ELD mandate, we know fleets and drivers are always seeking solutions that directly address their requirements and challenges.”

Gorilla co-founder and president Tommy Johnson elaborated that Enterprise gives sizable transportation companies a larger perspective.

“Our new Enterprise option aids larger fleets in having greater and improved oversight of their fleets while affording them the opportunity to better manage their drivers and operations,” Johnson said. “As the ELD mandate continues to shape the future of fleet management and safety, Gorilla Safety will advance too, ensuring we bring fleets all the tools necessary for achieving exceptional fleet performance in an affordable, easy-to-use platform that offers flexibility for any size fleet.”

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Evaluating the right technicians for your shop

Personnel needs are one of the biggest headaches a shop manager has, as finding the right people — much less the right technicians — can be extremely difficult. The right testing tools and expectations can help.

[Christopher Prioli](#) | Jul 31, 2018



First off, the shop manager must make the decision as to where to advertise for the needed help. Then, assuming the advertisement draws a response, comes the requisite interviews. Finally, the manager must wade through the data provided by the applicants to identify the best candidates.

Whether they are called "grease monkeys," mechanics, or the loftier and more correct technicians, these folks are the foundation upon which any maintenance and repair shop is built. As such, it is not uncommon that considerable time is spent identifying and selecting appropriate technicians for the particular shop.

Despite the time spent, however, shop managers often discover after the fact that the hired technicians do not have the knowledge level and/or hands-on skill set required to meet the expectations that the manager had at the time of hire.

This can be overcome by setting more appropriate expectations, and it can be done using technician evaluation programs designed to give the manager a clearer picture of the candidate's knowledge levels in several areas.

Over 35 years ago in 1982, *Fleet Owner* published a tool called the Fleet Owner Mechanic's Job Knowledge Test. It was broken up into various sections including shop tools (10 questions), diesel engines (20 questions), air brakes (10 questions), cooling system (five questions), electrical (40 questions), steering and suspension (10 questions), rear axle and driveshaft (five questions), hydraulic brakes (10 questions), transmission and clutch (10 questions), and gasoline engines (40 questions).

It shows how much trucks have changed in that time. By contrast, in today's fleets, gasoline engines—a main focus back then—are typically only in light-duty and some medium-duty vehicles, and sometimes not even there. On the other hand, the emphasis placed on electrical topics is appropriate, even today, as electricity seems to be among the least understood of all vehicle systems.

Other tests are available, modern in scope and written in some cases by qualified individuals in formats developed by professional test writers. One device used widely in modern technician job knowledge tests is the "Technician A /Technician B" challenge where statements by two technicians are presented, and the candidate must determine which is correct, or if both or neither are correct.

One example might be something like this:

"Technician A says that an inflated tire is round. Technician B says that a tire that is flat is only flat on the bottom."

Who is correct?

A typical general knowledge test will be comprised of 100 multiple-choice questions covering a range of vehicle topics. The best-written tests will have questions on all topics scattered throughout rather than broken up by question topics.

This requires the test candidate to have a certain degree of mental agility and reduces the likelihood of the candidate finding the answer to any given question in the text of another question in that test category.

Commercial tests are also available on specific topics such as HVAC, electricity, air brakes, drive train, and so forth. Tests of as many as 100 multiple-choice questions are not uncommon. A technician's score on a general job knowledge test is geared toward providing the manager with information regarding that technician's strengths and weaknesses across the vehicle.

Scores on single-category tests can be used as pre-test/post-test tools for training sessions. For example, a fleet manager may decide to send several technicians for training on electrical systems. To validate that training, the manager might then administer the single-topic electrical systems test prior to the training taking place and then again afterwards, comparing the scores for each technician.

Naturally, the manager is looking for a significant increase in test scores post-training. Another useful tactic is to re-administer the test to those technicians at some point in the future, e.g., 90 days post-training, to test for retention.

Great on paper

One common complaint from shop managers is that technicians applying for jobs have great skills on paper but who do not have the "hands-on" skills to back up their "book knowledge."

A well-written job knowledge test will have a certain number of questions that test for hands-on knowledge, based on specific maintenance or repair procedures rather than simply operational theory.

A common mistake might be to place too much emphasis on the score of a technician evaluation test and not enough emphasis on the scores in the individual areas tested. For example, a technician might score poorly overall, but maybe that technician aced all the electrical system questions—and electrical systems are historically among the least understood of all the truck systems.

Further, a technician who has a solid grasp on only one topic like that may still be a great catch.

The fact that one system is mastered could indicate a technician who can learn and retain

information, making the individual a good candidate for further training in other areas. In addition, that technician's solid knowledge can also be passed on to other technicians in the shop.

What are you driving?

Another quick guide to use in evaluating candidates for potential hire is to look at that candidate's personal transportation. Experience has shown that when the candidate's personal vehicle is not well-maintained, chances are good that the candidate's approach to maintenance leaves much to be desired—falling short of a true professional in the trade.

A key point regarding hiring any technician is professionalism, a broad term that has no single definition and is more a manner than a discrete characteristic. It is comprised of such things as personal grooming and dress and includes preparedness and courtesy.

If a job candidate shows up on time and appears to be well-prepared, the candidate's expectations of the company as well as the company's expectations of the candidate should be included in the discussion. It is important that a clear understanding is reached in both regards.

Credentials and requirements

Going back to the hiring process, every technician candidate must understand the pre-hire requirements that need to be met.

The company will probably require that all technicians hold a valid commercial driver's license (CDL), typically a Class A license, and with the endorsements appropriate to the vehicles that the technician will be road-testing. If the shop performs maintenance and repair operations to buses, for example, then the technician should be expected to have a suitable "Passenger Vehicle" endorsement.

Similarly, if the shop performs maintenance and repair operations on tank trailers, a tank endorsement is necessary and should be required. In addition to simply requiring a valid CDL, the company, together with its insurance carrier, must set a standard as to driving records and then must hold all new hire candidates to it.

All new hire candidates (as well as existing employees) must undergo drug testing as a requirement of the hiring process—and must pass the test to be put on the payroll.

The standard U.S. Dept. of Transportation (U.S. DOT) drug test recently was updated and now

checks for the presence of hydrocodone, hydromorphone, oxycodone, and oxymorphone as well as marijuana metabolites and THC, cocaine metabolites, amphetamines, opiate metabolites, including codeine and morphine, and phencyclidine (PCP).

Many other industries use a test that checks for drugs such as benzodiazepines, barbiturates, methadone, propoxyphene, and Quaaludes or can include Ecstasy/MDA and oxycodone/hydrocodone.

A new rule went into effect this year that requires DOT-regulated employers to test for metabolites of the semi-synthetic opiates oxycodone, oxymorphone, hydromorphone, and hydrocodone, in addition to other changes.

Specialties

Specialization by truck technicians is another point to consider. Often, a technician will have been specialized into a specific track such as a trailer technician or body and fender repair technician.

Technicians such as these will likely have limited skills outside of their area of specialization. However, sometimes the skills are transferable, even if the technicians themselves don't want to cross the hypothetical lines between their specialties and other repair work.

For example, a trailer specialist should have no problem doing a brake reline on a truck tractor. Likewise, a body and fender specialist should have no trouble repairing a gash in a trailer sidewall. It is up to the shop manager to utilize such technicians to the highest degree possible.

Frequently, technician candidates will turn up with existing credentials from the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (NIASE, or more commonly, ASE) indicating which ASE knowledge tests that technician has mastered. Sometimes, a technician will pass the full battery of tests required to become certified as a "Master Medium-Heavy Truck Technician."

In such cases, the company may opt to waive the job knowledge tests in favor of the ASE tests, which are a part of a recognized certification program.

An effective approach to the ASE certification issue is to make certification a condition of employment, just as is commonly done with a driver's license. At that point, the company should then pay an hourly incentive stipend for each ASE certification test taken and passed, up to a

maximum to be determined by the company.

Another useful strategy would be for the company to reimburse technicians on a one-time-per-test basis for the costs of taking those tests. This is an additional incentive toward gaining ASE certifications. Progress on the certification ladder can be used as a criterion for advancement when it comes time for annual employee reviews.

NIASE is a nonprofit organization based in Leesburg, VA, dedicated to the improvement and advancement of automotive service and repair, through testing technicians' skills as well as recognizing those technicians who have mastered their craft. A wealth of information is available at the ASE website, found at ase.com. Resources for technicians and employers are available there.

Classifications

Prevalent throughout the automotive service and repair industry is technician classification based on their apparent skill and knowledge levels. In the automotive repair environment, technician knowledge, capability, and experience levels are generally referred to using descriptive classifications as Level I, Level II, and Level III, or Class A, Class B, and Class C.

There is no real standardization regarding the designations used or their sequence. At one shop, an entry-level technician may be a Level I technician; at another facility, the entry-level designator may be Class C.

However, most facilities and unions seem to use a methodology in which the highest "Level" designation is the journeyman position, while the more primary "Class" designation holds that distinction. Thus, a Class A technician is generally equivalent to a Level III technician.

Whichever system of ordering the skill levels is in use, each next higher skill level must include all the requirements for all lower skill level designations within that system. Many facilities stick to a three-step scale, but four-step scales are gaining in popularity as a means of more appropriately assigning wage scales to the skill steps.

Using a four-step skill scale, the levels are generally described as:

- **Class A**—This is the journeyman skill level, at which the technician is fully capable of correctly making any diagnosis and properly performing any repair without the supervision, direction, or assistance of another individual.

- **Class B**—This is an advanced skill level at which the technician is capable of correctly making most common fault diagnoses and properly performing most common repairs with limited supervision or direction, and with the occasional assistance of another individual.
- **Class C**—The technician at this basic skill level requires supervisory direction and/or assistance to make any but the most basic diagnoses and repairs. Any diagnosis or repair made by a Class C technician must be reviewed and/or inspected by a supervisor or a mentoring Class A technician.
- **Class D**—A technician at this entry-level position is just beginning a career in heavy truck maintenance and repair. Class D technicians are capable of only the most basic diagnoses and repairs and will often require assistance even with those.

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