

Learning Without Scars

Quarterly Newsletter

Dynamic Internet Based Learning
TRAINING SOLUTIONS FOR EQUIPMENT DEALERSHIPS
Construction • Mining • Agriculture • Cranes • Trucks • Trailers

The Business of Business

Fall 2021

Savvy use of technology: Your key to building customer satisfaction and loyalty. Thanks to innovative systems in our world of change, distributors have the opportunity to support machines and surprise customers with unprecedented service. Since the 1950s, systems have been pervasively penetrating our businesses. They started as large batch, slow cumbersome things but they justified themselves on the basis of the reduction of many clerical functions. In other words, we paid for computers with the reduction of personnel expenses. The fear in the early years was that a computer would replace everyone. Then the computer moved into inventory management. Remember the Kardex systems? Well, I do, and those hundreds of feet of cabinets and the dozens of clerks updating the cards have all now disappeared. But things have changed recently in the systems world and it is no longer about reducing clerical staff and allowing better management controls on inventories. Now systems are about changing the way we do business. And I, for one, say it is about time.



Technology Makes A Difference

Our industry has long suffered from the fact that systems development did not keep pace in our industry at the same pace as systems development in other industries. We were simply too small a group of potential customers for systems developers to spend a lot of money adapting to our specific needs. That has all changed. The cost of systems has been reduced

drastically and systems and programming have also become easier and less costly. So now we have opportunities to improve how we do business, not just how we can reduce personnel. Let's have a quick look at some of the more obvious elements of how systems are changing our world.

Labor Collections Systems

Today you can have technicians enter their own time directly on the keyboard or scan a card to record their time on a job. What a difference from the days when the mechanic would sit down at the end of the day and write down the times he started and stopped on each job he worked on during the day. Today the entry can be done once, not two or three times – a nice change.

Parts Books and Service Manuals Online

The old days of Parts Books and Service Manuals on paper have been replaced. So too have the microfiche systems we used to employ. Today you can do it all on a terminal, either directly connected to the dealer business system or over the Internet. And with current touch-screen technology you can blow up the image so that even the smallest details can be seen. Similarly, there are reverse image options, so outdoor viewing is made easier.

Remote Parts Ordering for Technicians

Now that we have electronic manuals for parts and service, we have other opportunities. We used to have expensive, “dumb” environmentally sensitive terminals in use on most of our systems and they did not lend themselves to the service shop or field truck. Today, we have tablets and notebooks that are inexpensive and physically tougher for our work environment. Today, we can leave technicians in their bays and have them order parts directly online on a tablet or notebook.

Kiosks

In-store merchandising is facilitated by a self-service kiosk. Similar to the customer checkout stand in a grocery store, customers can shop in the store and put their items in a shopping cart. Go to the kiosk and check everything out yourself. It will accept cash or credit cards and give you a receipt. Fast

and convenient – what every busy customer appreciates.

Data Storage and Lead Times

Over the years we have been stuck by the cost of storage on a computer system. Well, that problem has been overcome in very dramatic fashion. When you can buy a terabyte storage device at Walmart for under \$100, I think you see what I mean. That means we can store parts sales history by week for years with very little cost. Finally, we can keep sufficient history to calculate the lead time for each part number rather than for a supplier. This will make a very significant difference in the customer experience. And it can be used for other aspects of the business such as account look-up and service appointments.

Did you know that our training courses are offered in English, Spanish and French?

Inspections

Using current technology with touchscreen tablets and notebooks we can have predetermined checklists that enable individuals to walk through a dealership yard inspecting machines, at a check-in and check-out at a rental yard, and with customers making notes at an auction. This provides a huge benefit in consistency and accuracy.

VoIP

The Voice over Internet Protocol means that we can have the phone system run from the computer. Imagine the possibilities with the phone ringing on your desk and your screen filling up with who is on the line and all the pertinent information you have on that customer. Have they just purchased a machine from you? Is it their birthday? Do they have an outstanding balance on their account? How long since they last purchased a part? Are they waiting on a backorder? Who last visited them and what did they talk about? It's all valuable information that will help in deepening the relationship you have with them.

Internet Ordering

In today's world we need to be able to provide an Internet portal for our customers. This portal should allow them to inquire on availability, check prices, place orders, and set up appointments in your service

department. In other words, it gives them the full and complete access to your business whenever they want and wherever they are. Many of you already purchase materials on the Internet – if you don't allow your customers to interact with you on the Internet you will be left behind.

CRM

Customer Relationship Management is the current terminology for managing the relationship between a retailer and their customers. This covers call reporting and market opportunities. It covers communications on a planned and timely basis following your marketing strategy. The CRM approach allows you to set up "triggers" that will provoke activities based on a set of facts. Things that might be missed will now be automatic. When is the warranty going to expire? Is there a product improvement on the machine? These are but two small examples of the power of CRM.

Signature Pads

We have paper files all over a dealership. The space for the cabinets and storage media and the clerical time necessary to put things away represent a large cost within the business. One of the reasons used to be that we needed to keep the piece of paper that had the customer signature on it. Well, look around you and you will see signature pads. They are at Walmart and your local grocery store, they are everywhere. They should be in this dealership too. They are inexpensive and accurate, and best of all, they free you from the need to keep that piece of paper.

GPS and Telematics

By now global positioning is everywhere; from your TomTom to your cell phone. We should have them on our field service vehicles and even our sales vehicles. Knowing where the field service staff is and on which job they are working and when they will be completed is extremely beneficial. This allows us to manage work even when it is in the field.

Mapping Software

Imagine having every machine in the field – the complete machine population – represented on an electronic map. Perhaps you could use different color pins for different types of machines or even difference ages of machines. Would that make establishing a sales territory any easier? I certainly think so. How about having your field service vehicles showing up wherever they



are in the territory during the day and knowing when the job they are on would be finished – how useful would that knowledge be when the customer has just called the dealership, or when another customer calls in with a machine failure two miles down the road? It's all doable with some pretty basic software.

E-mail Blasts

This one is kind of intriguing. Imagine being able to send an e-mail to all of a particular category of customer automatically, carrying a progressive message with a specific offer. I suspect you are thinking of things you might want to offer to them now. All of this is easily done with current technology and systems.

Facebook and Twitter

Not just for the younger set, Facebook and Twitter are two tools that I am sure you have heard about and in many cases perhaps you are using. These are just indications that we have to become much more alert to the world around us, as it is changing at a rapid pace. Ignore it at your own peril.

Final Words

I hope this has provoked some thinking and even spurred some of you into action. Jack Welch is famous, among other things, for saying “when the world around you is changing at a rate faster than you are...the end is near.” I think that might underestimate the significance of the changes in our world. How you attract and retain talented employees depends on not just your company but the tools that you make available to allow them to do good work. Your customers want you to be leading edge not the last in the game. This is about leadership in so many ways. Good luck and keep your eyes open, because the next change is just around the corner.

Learning Without Scars



As a third-generation educator, it is easy to say that teaching and training are in the blood for Ron Slee. From his beginnings as a coach, through his time at McGill University, Ron developed a foundation for the work he does today.

Learning Without Scars provides comprehensive online learning programs for employees starting with an individualized skills assessment. These assessments allow us to then create a personalized employee development program. From their assessed skills, the employee is asked to select from classes designed for their skill level which allow them to address the gaps in their knowledge level. This allows the employees to move through four progressive categories of learning: Basic, Intermediate, Advanced and Expert.



We have numerous contributors to our 'Socrates Says' blog from all over the world covering a range of topics. There is industry specific contributions and we are sure you will find something that is relevant to your job. Please see our website for more details.



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Your opinion is important to us! We are always looking to help people through engaging material. If you have a question or a specific topic you would like us to cover in a future newsletter, please email Ron ron@learningwithoutscars.com

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