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# DO YOU HOLD THE KEYS?

*Submitted by Roy Collette*

*Hanco Corp.*



Keys, you say? Isn't TPMS difficult and confusing enough? And now you say we need keys too? Well, not in the literal sense, of course. But there are keys to help your company successfully manage the largest change in the tire aftermarket in the last 25 years. If you have not been keeping up with this change, now is the time to get started!

***The first key is understanding - understanding the law and the industry.***

Without spending a lot of words explaining, **TPMS is the law.** By the 2008 model year all vehicles under 10,000 lb. GVW must have a TPMS. Some special vehicles, motorcycles and trucks with dual wheel assemblies are exempt. Many vehicles already have them as auto manufacturers phase the systems in. Because this is the law, **do not** disable this system or make it inoperative in any manner. You are, or can be held liable for tampering with this system.

With the cost of replacement TPMS sensors, and 100% compliance in just a few years, there will be no such thing as simple tire service anymore.

The way the TPMS table is set now, the tire industry is on the low end looking up at the auto industry that controls the design and aftermarket service. The auto manufacturers have mandated to their dealers to get into the tire business. The auto manufacturers want this business back in their shops. Car dealers are telling their customers they must get their tires serviced by them because they are the ones who have the tools and the training necessary to do the job right. Only **YOU** can prevent this transition.

***What actual keys are needed to move a company into TPMS?***

First, have your technicians attend a good class and receive training with accurate and up to date information. Find a supplier who not only has the product, but also has up to date information. Next check the industry and get the best tools available. Then make a plan for how you will manage TPMS in your company and make sure you charge for the service. Remember, the auto dealers are!

When your customer comes in to purchase tires or wants you to repair one, make sure you check the sensor first. Preferably, check the sensor while the customer is there. Remember, when the job is done and the sensor does not work, guess who will be held responsible? Using the proper tool your tech may trigger the sensor and determine the frequency and system used, thereby avoiding any blame for faulty systems. Let your customer know that he/she has tire pressure sensors in their vehicle and should problems arise, you are only a phone call away.

***What key will keep your company on the cutting edge of TPMS?***

There is much misinformation on the streets regarding TPMS and the technology is changing all of the time. As in any industry with new technology, there are constant updates and changes. So be alert and prepared to respond to these as they come.

In short, once you understand the impact of TPMS, the keys you need to move into TPMS are training, tools and a plan. Lastly, stay prepared for change! Remember only **YOU** hold the keys to your company's success with TPMS. **Your company's future depends on it!**

## Planning To Terminate An Employee

At some point, most managers have to make the decision to terminate an employee. Perhaps the person is performing poorly or causing workplace disruptions. Some terminations involve long-standing problems. Perhaps an employee's performance has been gradually eroding, or a manager might "inherit" a slacker who has never before been confronted.

For long-term problems, start laying groundwork for the termination as soon as you can. The longer you wait, the more difficult the situation becomes. The employee has relied on the fact that his or her behavior has been tolerated in the past. If you delay, you give the individual a larger window of opportunity to file a preemptive discrimination charge. That complicates the termination and adds the possibility of a retaliation claim against your organization.

Some misconduct occurs abruptly rather than stretching over a long period of time. A manager might discover that an employee has stolen money. An employee might threaten violence in the workplace. Serious situations require an immediate supervisory response. Sometimes the best response is termination.

Terminations are rarely easy. Here are some suggestions to help you move ahead:

- ◆ Clarify in your own mind the reasons for termination. What has the employee done, or not done, that warrants dismissal? Is the situation long-standing or sudden?
- ◆ Check your policies on performance and termination. Also, check any union or individual contracts.
- ◆ Review the policies carefully. The wording may be general

("Our employees display the highest ethical standards") or specific ("No stealing, cursing, or fighting"). Follow the policies meticulously.

- ◆ If the performance problem is long-standing, check for past documentation. Does the employee's recent evaluations document the problem? If not, before termination you may need to provide clear explanations to the individual regarding the problems and how he or she can correct them.
- ◆ For a sudden situation, consider the option of suspension if you need time to investigate the details. Termination can follow the suspension, if the facts show it to be necessary.
- ◆ Don't wait too long to act. Things only become harder as time passes.
- ◆ Has the employee facing termination been involved in filing or supporting a discrimination charge? Is the individual a whistleblower?
- ◆ Consult with your human resources staff or a lawyer regarding the termination. This is particularly important if the individual has been involved in a discrimination charge or whistleblowing.

Termination should generally be handled face-to-face rather than by mail or e-mail. Steps for planning the meeting include:

- ◆ Pick a neutral time and place. Many employers avoid terminations on Fridays, since an employee would have all weekend to stew.

- ◆ Arrange for a third person to be present to take notes.
- ◆ Plan what you will say to explain your decision.
- ◆ Decide when the employee should leave, either the same day or on a future date.
- ◆ Work out details on the final paycheck and on benefits.
- ◆ Think through what equipment and materials the employee will need to return. The list may include: keys, building access cards, computer equipment, cell phone, credit card, identification card, name tag, parking permit, tools, or uniform.
- ◆ If the employee has received a loan from the employer, plan for repayment or loan cancellation.
- ◆ If you want the employee to sign a release, have the document ready.
- ◆ Plan to obtain a forwarding address.
- ◆ Decide when and how you will notify co-workers. Keep information to a minimum, to protect the departing employees' privacy.

Finally, anticipate the steps you will need to take during or after the departure. These may include: closing computer and email accounts; changing pass codes on computer systems or security doors; changing locks and combinations; removing a telephone voice message; altering email distribution lists; updating the website, organization chart, and building directory; cleaning out a work station, files, computer, or office.

These best practices can help guide you through a termination, whether the terrain is familiar to you or not.

## Repair Shop Management

Our plans for the workday are often foiled by interruptions. Here are some ways to avoid those “time bombs.” Time is both our greatest asset and our greatest enemy. How we use it defines the differences in the two. If you move through every day as planned, uninterrupted and accomplishing all you’ve set out to, you’re not only lucky, but unique. Most people lack the skills needed to adequately manage their time.

The key to managing time to our greatest advantage is, acting on the belief that priorities rule. This starts with decisions that carefully pencil in each day’s “pocket.” That allows us to devote physical and mental energy to designated tasks. It ends with us actually engaging in that activity to accomplish those tasks.

I know it always seems easier said than done, but armoring up against “incoming” is the trick to winning the war. “Time bombs” will always be our daily challenge. These include procrastination, other peoples’ needs, time guzzlers, and lack of knowledge. The impact of these time bombs ranges from hindering progress to stopping it altogether.

Acknowledging the “ticking” sound and doing something to stop it will be your best defense against time bombs. Now, let’s take a closer look at each of those time bombs, and at some “armor” we can use to defend ourselves against them.

First, there’s procrastination, or “why do today what I can put off till it’s almost late.” Too often, we drag our feet until the need to get it done reaches the red alert stage. For the most part, the tasks we tend to ignore, hoping they’ll go away, are the ones we’re just not sure about. We’re not sure how they should be handled or if somebody else should help get it done. They’re labeled “no fun tasks,” uninteresting, with not enough to gain by completing them, at least not immediately. They’re tasks that are going to be difficult to accomplish, that will use up more of our energy than we’re willing to give or that will result in more headache than headway.

The armor against procrastination is “distress management.” We must pencil these tasks into the priorities lineup, delegate them to someone we know can manage it, and let them decide the plan to complete it (the time needed, expectations, etc.).

We must provide whatever assistance he or she needs and agree on how often we should check back for a progress report. If we still can’t seem to get things underway, we’ll delegate it to someone else. Even if it costs some money now, it will save us much more later!

Another ticking time bomb is other peoples’ needs. As we begin to encounter people and circumstances outside of the day’s priority focus, we can be drawn away from our agenda and lose progress. Schedules can be interrupted and tasks, dropped, because of just one phone call.

The armor against this time bomb is, “priorities management.” We must stay focused on “the hour and hand.” As outside sources that will interrupt our schedule come on the scene, we must give them just enough attention to arrange a later follow-up time with that person. The interruption needs to be a detour, not a derailment.

A third time bomb is, time guzzlers. Time guzzlers are employees who always seem to be saying, “I’m sorry, I messed that up,” or “I’ll pay closer attention next time.”

The armor against these time guzzlers is, “production management.” Part of the business managers job is to manage other people and their problems, keeping them productive. If there’s someone in our employ whose basic character seems to fit that of the “time guzzler,” it may be time to say good-bye. Why do we hold on to time guzzlers? Often it’s because of the time it may take to replace that person, or our personal feeling of guilt. Regardless, we must get time guzzlers out of our lives and get on with being productive, for the benefit of ourselves and every other employee.

Another time bomb is lack of knowledge. This appears when we believe a task will take one hour, but it ends up taking two. We had a work-able schedule for the day, but it’s falling apart! Time equals money. If a task wastes time, it wastes money, too.

The armor against lack of knowledge is, “interaction management.” We must be clear about instructions and expectations for the task. We also must follow up regularly to make sure schedules are being met. We must not wait till things are out of control.

Most of us would love to live life by an exact agenda every day, but how unrealistic is that? We must practice the solutions to the problems talked about here, and keep this most important thought in mind: Time is like money; we can only spend it once, so we must spend it wisely!