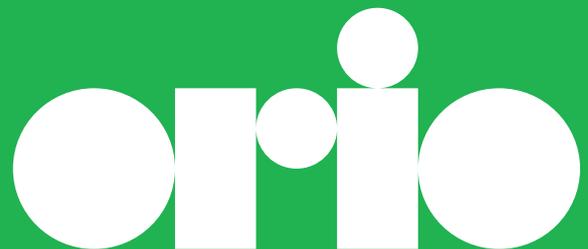


# Keep track of your work flows

– It's like discovering gold in your own backyard!



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## Introduction

In a perfect world, there are customers queuing up outside your workshop, your mechanics instantly diagnose problems at the press of a button, and the cars are repaired with ready-selected spare parts and returned to smiling, grateful customers.

Although the real world isn't always like this, it is worth making your workshop run as smoothly as possible – from customer reception through service and repairs to when the customer picks up the car. This is convenient, efficient and profitable for you, your mechanics and your customers.

If you and your staff can diagnose and fix faults and perform services faster than other workshops, both you and your customers will be happy.



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## 01

### Smooth + efficient = profitable workshop

It's all down to organization, planning, preparation and efficient, rational work flows. Time is money. You need to keep track of your staff costs per hour, per day and per month. How can you achieve this?

It's easy to become so focused on small costs and earnings that you fail to notice the larger costs and earnings flying out of the garage door.

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## 02

### Control and optimize your work flows

YOU once learned to do the job correctly. Over the years you've probably learned a few tricks for speeding up your workflows. Make sure your mechanics do things in the right way. And if they discover how to do something faster without compromising on health and safety, learn from their experience and make sure others also learn to work faster.

You need to constantly monitor the processes at your workshop and give feedback in order to raise your efficiency.

It's all about planning, preparing adequately for service and repairs and keeping check of your time expenditure, work flows and time schedules.

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## 03

### Customer reception – your customer's first and last impression of the workshop

It stands to reason that you should give customers the best possible reception when they arrive.

The reception area, the reception staff and the inside of the workshop are usually what the customer sees at your workshop. The person who takes the car into the workshop to be serviced or fixed also plays a part in creating a good impression. Whether the initial contact is made over the Internet, on the phone or in person, it's important to gather as much information as possible about the customer, the vehicle and what needs resolving.

The reception staff must, in a friendly manner, gather as much information as possible about the customer (name, contact details), the vehicle (registration number and history), the job (what needs to be done) and other necessary details (e.g. regarding the guarantee or insurance), and suggest a time frame for performing the work.

Besides smoothing relations and making it easy for the customer to get their problem fixed, this will also rationalize procedures at the workshop later. Having as much information as possible makes it easier to diagnose the vehicle, prepare the work and rationalize the workflows.

Your customers should feel that they know what to expect and are leaving their car in the safe hands of an expert.

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## 04

### The service advisor

In more complex cases, it might be necessary for the customer to consult a service advisor. From the customer's perspective, this often signals higher service costs. For this reason, it is important to explain to the customer why this consultation is necessary, how it will benefit them and whether it will cost them extra.

The service advisor's role is to explain and present the various options for resolving the problem. The service advisor also needs to explain the various alternatives from the customer's perspective. In this context, it is important to focus on what the customer wants from his or her car. Would the customer benefit from buying a new car to reduce the need for future repairs, or should he or she be forewarned of the more extensive repairs that will probably be required?

## 05

## Inside the workshop – what happens there?

A job comes in and it needs to be assigned to somebody. There are many different aspects to be considered.

The work must be performed and quality checked before the car is returned to the customer. After that, the customer must be told about the diagnosis and what work has been done, and you need to find out whether the customer is satisfied. In most cases, the customer will be satisfied if the car is returned as good as new, at the agreed price (as low as possible), and within the agreed time. Meeting all these criteria is often quite a challenge.

### How do you succeed?

Above all, there must be positive work climate and good teamwork in the workshop. Maintain an open dialogue about what needs to be done during the day and make sure everyone is prepared to work at his or her best ability.

## 06

## Organization and preparation are essential

It is important to know what preparations are required to make the day's work as efficient as possible, and to ensure that these preparations are made. This can mean anything from ensuring that the vehicle arrives in time (the reception staff must contact the customer) to distributing the work rationally and intelligently.

## 07

## Preparing the parts in advance – managing your spare parts stock

Always having the right parts available saves time and effort and shortens the customer's waiting time. But it's impossible to keep a vast stock of spare parts for every conceivable eventuality. How can you solve this problem?

The solution is to always have a buffer stock and order extra parts for your booked jobs well in advance. Then you can group your orders into the minimum number of consignments per day. This rationalizes your workflows and allows you to combine all the parts needed for today or tomorrow's services into one operation.

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## 08

### Hidden time costs

You can calculate margins until you're blue in the face, but this doesn't do much good unless you are aware that time costs money. Placing and receiving orders costs time - and it's your time being spent. You might not take this time into consideration, because it's your own time. Coordinating orders saves time, money and effort. Every time you answer the phone or sit down at the computer to place an order, you have an invisible cost in the form of expended time. Not to mention the time it costs when you or your staff receives, inspect and sign for many individual deliveries. Instead, combine your orders into as few consignments as possible. Most good spare parts suppliers offer free delivery of one consignment per working day. If your parts arrive in multiple consignments every day, your margins will quickly disappear.

If you have to interrupt what you are doing to receive deliveries, not only will you lose the time it takes to receive the consignment, but it also costs you time when you resume the interrupted activity. Small interruptions in your work are the most dangerous hidden time costs.

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## 09

### Determine what parts you need before the customer arrives

Remember that the car make, model year and suspected problem/service will need to be registered when the repair or service is booked. If the customer has used your workshop before, you will probably already have made notes of possible future repair needs. Check that you have the necessary spare parts. If they are in the warehouse, reserve them. If any parts are missing, order them well in advance so they are there when the vehicle arrives.

For certain services, you will already know exactly which parts need to be replaced. Have these parts ready to be installed as soon as the car is raised up. If the mechanic has to go and search for the part with the car already in place is anything but cost-effective.

## 10

### Planning

Always plan ahead and focus on the customer's main priority: getting their car back in perfect working order as soon as possible.

Planning and preparing your work is essential. Just as a chef prepares the kitchen before starting work, you and your employees must plan and prepare your work station. If you prepare the right tools, parts and vehicle information and have ready access to diagnostic software and shared equipment, there will be no unwelcome interruptions eating away at your time during the day. Needless to say, it is essential to maintain an orderly workplace. Searching for or tripping over lost tools isn't only a waste of time - it's also a health and safety risk. Also, regularly inspect all your equipment to avoid injury and damage to people and vehicles in your workshop.

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## 11

### Being consistent

Work plans, work orders, diagnostic tools and spare parts should always be readily accessible near your work stations. If you use a consistent method for planning each service or repair, your mechanics can find their way around each other's work stations and don't have to spend time looking for tools or parts.

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## 12

### Fix the big problems first

Do the most difficult services or repairs first to avoid running out of time towards the end of the day. If it is hard to predict exactly how long a complex job will take, let the customer know so that he or she can plan their day or week (depending on the expected time it will take). Uncertainty is bad for your customer and bad for you. Keep written records of how complex repairs were resolved and share the experience with all your employees.

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**13**

## Repair it correctly the first time

This mantra cannot be repeated enough. Make sure your mechanics know and do their job. Establish routines for checking and ensuring that each vehicle returned to the customer is correctly serviced and repaired. Faulty work not only jeopardizes your customer's safety; it also makes your customer lose faith in you. And when your customer loses faith, you lose your customer forever.

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**14**

## Always aim to improve and to do things a bit better

It might not be feasible to start a quality control circle in your workshop, but you could do something similar on a small scale with a smaller budget. Control the quality of your work processes and constantly find ways of improving each job. Encourage your mechanics to contribute their suggestions and feedbacks about the way things are done at work.

Keep a lookout for factors that undermine work efficiency and safety. During the autumn and winter, cold, damp and dirt can make the work more difficult. Plan ahead to minimize these problems as much as possible.

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**15**

## Clocking of working time and individual tasks

Working time and individual tasks need to be clocked in order to make comparisons and improve your processes. This is particularly important if you have a bonus system. It's also crucial to assure the quality of all your work. And make sure all your employees learn from each other's expertise and the improvements made in the work place. They may not all be able to explain in words exactly what they do, but the fastest workers can probably demonstrate their working methods so that everyone can learn from it.

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## 16

### Cooperation

Cooperation is based on clear, open communication between everyone, whether they are supervisors or subordinates. Aim to anticipate problems and see potential solutions. Refer to the fixed time frames before starting each operation. Don't start a job that you can't finish.

Discuss problems as they arise and focus on solutions rather than problems or individuals. Create a culture in which solutions are always welcome, regardless of who suggests them.

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## 17

### Controlling the work flow

Keep a clear, easily overview able schedule of workflows for the vehicles serviced at your workshop and what needs doing to them. Make sure you make it easy for everyone at your workshop to follow this schedule.

Have clear procedures for passing tasks from one employee to the next through all stages of the workflow. Specify clearly what needs to be done, by whom, when the task was completed and who completed it.

Whether you use a computer application, a whiteboard or a noticeboard to plan your workflows and report completed work (on a daily or weekly basis), it is crucial to ensure that everybody uses the same system and understands and has access to the information.

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## 18

### Five rules for your work flow system

**Dynamic:** So people can track work in progress on the vehicles

**Systematic:** The system should be accepted and understood by everyone

**Correct:** Only correct data and work status information must be entered

**Consistent:** The system must be used in a consistent manner and everyone must share responsibility for it

**Accessible to everyone:** Everyone must be able to see what they and others have left to do and what has been completed