

EXPRESS OIL INCREASES SERVICE WITH ACTIVANT INTEGRATED ESTIMATOR™ SYSTEM



Every decade or so, a handful of elite companies introduce truly revolutionary business models to industries steeped in tradition. In the automotive service market – still dominated by small, local providers – that company is Express Oil Change & Service Center™, which has turned the “fast lube” category on its head by delivering the type of customer experience one might expect from a doctor’s office or high-end jeweler.

PROFILE

Headquarters: Birmingham, Alabama

Locations: 175

Founded: 1979

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RUSS STEINBECK

SR. V.P., FRANCHISE SUPPORT,

TRAINING AND OPERATIONAL SYSTEMS

EXPRESS OIL CHANGE

Express Oil’s approach is not only revolutionary but also very effective. The chain, now totaling approximately 175 stores throughout the southeastern U.S., attracts 35 percent more vehicles per day to each location than its industry peers and enjoys a 52 percent advantage in average revenue per store. And unlike other lube chains – even those that emphasize add-on services – Express Oil’s mechanical business accounts for an astounding 30 percent of its annual sales.

“We’re not about being average; we’re about being exceptional in every area of the business, and particularly in the way we interact with our customers,” said Russ Steinbeck, senior vice president of franchise support, training and operational systems for the Birmingham, Alabama-based franchise network.

Numbers Say It All: ‘Our Customers Trust Us’

This customer-centric approach begins with what Steinbeck calls “The Show,” the process of greeting within 10 seconds, advising and serving every oil change customer. But, again unlike other lube businesses, Express Oil also operates dedicated mechanical repair bays staffed almost exclusively by ASE-certified technicians. Any time a lube technician notes an additional maintenance or repair need, this fact is quickly, professionally – and with absolutely no pressure – communicated to the customer. This practice complements the first item in Express Oil’s corporate vision statement, which reads, “Our customers trust us.”

Trust them they do. As part of its commitment to continually enhance the consumer experience, Express Oil surveys its growing base of new customers regarding their first visits. In the most recent results, 67 percent of respondents rated Express Oil as “Excellent” in the “Trust” category and an additional 24.3 percent offered a “Very Good” rating on their first visit. These results invariably translate into customer referrals, as Express Oil’s “Net Promoter Score” – the percentage of customers who say they would recommend the company to a friend or family member – stands at 82 percent, outpacing all other franchise networks as well as such leading global corporations as Apple Computer, Inc. (81 percent) and Amazon.com (71 percent).

Activant ISE™ Solution Drives Record Growth

A key part of Express Oil's success in add-on services has been the implementation of the Activant Integrated Service Estimator™ solution, a proven Web-based estimating system that enables automotive service chains to instantly access the parts and labor information needed to estimate and complete virtually any common automotive repair.

The solution provides one-click access to the industry leading Activant PartExpert® database of 7.9 million parts covering approximately 148.5 million applications. Other leading Activant databases included in the solution are the LaborExpert® aftermarket flat-rate labor guide, EZWrite™ database of popular repair and maintenance services, InterChange® OE-to-aftermarket cross-reference, a comprehensive database of OEM-recommended scheduled vehicle maintenance items, and automatic VIN decoding tool. All parts, labor and pricing information is automatically transferred into Express Oil's ISITM point-of-sale system to quickly generate estimates, work orders and invoices.

Now installed in more than 150 Express Oil locations, the Activant ISE system has helped drive significant improvements in several key performance areas, including mechanical sales per location (up nearly 20 percent over prior year, and growing), consumer confidence in technician knowledge (up 15 percent) and Net Promoter Score for mechanical service (now at 79 percent and rising).

"Before implementing Activant (ISE), our technicians were manually generating estimates, and when you do that there's a lot less confidence and precision in the process. Customers start to negotiate and technicians were more inclined to mark down prices because they might be uncomfortable in certain sales situations. Activant eliminated all of that for us," Steinbeck said.

"We have truly world-class technicians in our network. Their buy-in was an absolute requirement before we went forward with ISE. We involved them in the process of validating and refining the system, and when they said it was ready to go we rolled it out across the network."

'Now We Can Measure Everything'

"Don't expect what you can't inspect." In keeping with this philosophy, Express Oil carefully monitors dozens of performance indicators not only for each store, but also for every oil and mechanical technician. "We know how many estimates our teams write, how many we convert, how many of these jobs came out of the oil change bay, and the average mechanical ticket," Steinbeck said. "All of this is made possible through our top-performing technicians and the Activant ISE system."

Technicians themselves have reported that the solution has made them more effective on the job. In a recent survey, 94 percent acknowledged that the system has improved their ability to communicate with customers. "Do you know how hard it is to get a highly trained, hard-working technician – someone who takes great pride in what they do – to admit that a computer system is helping them do a better job?" Steinbeck said. "It's off the charts."



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ABOUT ACTIVANT

Activant, a leading technology provider of business management solutions serving small and medium-sized businesses, offers customers tailored proprietary software, professional services, content, supply chain connectivity and analytics. Activant's systems are designed to help customers increase sales, boost productivity, operate more cost-efficiently, improve inventory turns and enhance trading partner relationships.

To learn more about this or other
Activant products and services,
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