

TECHNICIAN DIAGNOSTIC SKILLS IN THE AGE OF **COMPUTER-CONTROLLED APPLIANCES**

The appliance repair industry is changing, and it's changing fast. Over the past couple of decades, appliance technology has become much more complicated, and it's only going to continue to do so; a fact that many appliance technicians nowadays bemoan. For many of these techs, not knowing how to troubleshoot properly can cause them to feel threatened by these new and different appliances. Many are even thinking, wishfully, that the increasing use of electronics in appliances is just a fad and will go away.

But this couldn't be further from the truth. Computers in appliances are not only here to stay, they're evolving and, for many techs, getting "scarier." In addition to troubleshooting microprocessor-controlled appliances, technicians will soon be troubleshooting Wi-Fi and internet connectivity problems with these appliances. So techs are faced with a choice. Either complain about the changing times and wax nostalgic for the good ol' days, or learn the skills they need to stay current and successfully repair these computerized machines.

What are these skills? Nothing more outlandish than structured troubleshooting and logical thinking, combined with a functional understanding of appliance technology. That may sound simple enough, but you would be surprised by how many techs eschew basic diagnostic techniques, such as coming to a job prepared with tech documents, doing a simple load analysis using the schematic, or performing electrical measurements from easy-access locations to definitively identify the component failure.

Instead, they rely on pattern recognition and rules-of-thumb to get the job done – in the vein of "if this problem, replace this part." Sadly, many techs think that this is what real troubleshooting looks like. A couple decades ago, when there were far fewer microprocessors used in appliances, they could get away with this... not anymore. As a result, we now see more and more botched fixes, replaced parts that didn't need to be replaced, and calls to tech line even though everything that the technician needed to perform the repair was right in front of them.

This lack of real diagnostic skills sets you up to be overtaken by your competition. If you are the manager of a service business, I encourage you to reevaluate how your technicians operate and are managed with

this in mind. A smart tech who implements even basic troubleshooting strategies can quickly increase their profits and, even more importantly, earn loyalty from their customers due to the swiftness and effectiveness of their repairs.

DO YOU RECOGNIZE ANY OF THESE TRAITS IN YOUR OWN SERVICE CALLS?

1. The tech arrives at the service call with no technical literature on hand. A manager may have pre-screened the calls and had probable parts pre-loaded on the service tech's vehicle, but the tech is walking into the call completely cold.
2. If the call is anything other than a simple problem, the tech calls either his service manager or the manufacturer tech line.
3. The tech is spoon-fed information to complete the diagnosis or repair; he is merely following detailed instructions but not doing the troubleshooting and problem-solving himself.
4. The appliance may get repaired as a result of the spoon-feeding, but the tech never grows in his ability to perform independent troubleshooting analysis – he still must rely on his manager or tech line to get anything done.

As prevalent as these poor troubleshooting practices are throughout the trade, there are still many techs who rise to the challenge posed by increasingly computerized appliances. These troubleshooting skills are eminently learnable by anyone who desires to do so. We at Master Samurai Tech have been teaching methodical troubleshooting for years now, and we've seen firsthand how much techs can improve their businesses by implementing even basic diagnostic principles.

Yes, the appliance repair industry is changing fast. But if you act now, teaching your techs real troubleshooting techniques (such as how to read a schematic, take measurements, draw logical conclusions, and understand computerized technology) you will not just keep up with this evolution; you will profit from it.

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