

Live in the high-tech here and now



BY JEANA BABCOCK

My kids and I recently took my mom to a clinic appointment. While she was being seen by the doctor, we broke out our trusty Uno game I keep stashed in my car for emergency boring situations. We were getting

all kinds of crazy looks from passersby as we reversed and skipped and +4'd each other.

Then, in the middle of our heated game, the receptionist came up to us and said "I've never seen anyone do this before, it's really great." I suppose, in this day and age, it seemed a bit unorthodox to be playing a card game in public with my kids when most people are usually playing on their "devices". But it takes a whole lot more to embarrass me than playing with my kids, laughing and occasionally shouting out "uno!" for all to hear. Card games are my jam. I've certainly got my nose in my iPhone or computer more often than not, so I take every opportunity I can to take a break and engage with my kids.

What about you? How much time are you involved with a computer, phone or other device on any given day? More than you want to be? I know I am and sometimes it sure is challenging to find a balance. But I am grateful for what computers offer and quite relieved that I am not hand writing this or punching it out on a typewriter!

As an automotive business owner, I am in awe of what computer systems are capable of. The days of hand-written estimates and invoices are gone. They are replaced with complex operating systems that have the ability to save customer/vehicle information and repair/maintenance history, order parts, generate repair estimates, check maintenance needed, inquire about recall status, finalize and apply payments to a bill and so much more.

The automotive industry becomes even more technology-reliant than other industries because of the sheer number of computers inside any given vehicle. Look at the incredible features vehicles offer these days—they

are souped up with incredible power, performance, advancements and gadgets. Repair shops must be equipped with advanced technology capable of diagnosing and fixing any problem that may come about on hundreds of different kinds of vehicles. They must also work hard to continually upgrade their devices as technology is ever-changing.

Technology is also used to optimize websites, offer motorist educational tools, schedule appointments online, email/text service reminders and build relationships with social media. And what about new technology that is developed specifically for the automotive industry? What benefits does it offer to the owners of the vehicles, mechanics and automotive businesses?

I am sure there are many programs that I am not aware of. But I am privy to a new and exciting system that has been recently developed and has the potential to move from the "old school" way of doing things with paper and handwritten notes to the "new school" high-tech way with digital inspections and communication.

Here is how it has the potential to work: You bring your vehicle to the shop and explain the reason for your visit to the Service Advisor (SA). The SA creates a repair order and assigns your vehicle to a technician. Each technician is equipped with an iPad. Depending on the service needed, an inspection form will be chosen—courtesy inspection, brake inspection, etc. The technician performs a "wellness exam" based on a digital systematic approach in which he is able to choose from custom drop-down boxes, type or talk-to-text notes and take pictures of any concern found.

When the technician is finished with the exam and has addressed all concerns or maintenance items needed, his findings are immediately uploaded and accessible to the SA. The SA is then able to see repairs needed to fix



any symptoms the vehicle has and look at the overall health of the vehicle and maintenance needed. At this point, he or she can generate an estimate based on the technician's findings. Depending on where you are (in the lobby or at a different location), the results, estimate, photos and even educational videos can be shown to you in person or via email as the SA reviews what was found. He or she can advise you of what is needed and prioritize services based on the level of importance concerning safety and general vehicle health.

This system greatly improves communication between all parties, allows for professional documentation without handwritten notes while also improving technician efficiency in the inspection process and easily provides the service advisors with visual information that

can be translated to the vehicle owner.

How do you feel about new technology? Does the learning process make you shy away from new things? Do you ever wish things could be simpler with hand written receipts, finding a business in the yellow pages or buying a more basic vehicle without so many bells and whistles that might break? I sure do! But we cannot live in the past. We can either embrace the changes by jumping on the technology train or chase the train and lag behind. Of course, it is always wise to find a balance. We must decipher the good from the bad, determine the time savers vs. the time wasters, be a good example of our technology choices and never, ever pass up the opportunity to play a card game with our loved ones.

Article courtesy of Babcock Auto Care.