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How one sale can earn income for years

Fluid test kit sales create profitable customers, ongoing reorders

Would you like to create an ongoing annual revenue stream for each sale you make? Reorders are one good way to keep the cash flowing into your business while saving a lot of time.

One consistent source of reorders is consumables—that is, items that are used up and replaced regularly. Fluid testing kits are great consumables. I especially like test kits because they have the added benefit of increasing a shop owner’s fluid exchange sales far more than the pocket change they cost.

placed on a test pad and compared to a chart to decide if the fluid is good or needs replacing.

There are test kits for most vital fluids in a vehicle. The most common test kits are for engine coolant, brake fluid, transmission fluid, power steering fluid, gear oil and motor oil. Some kits even test diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) and fuel.

I especially like the “Show and Sell” nature of these tests. By creating visible evidence, the test gives a technician or service writer something he can show his customer to support suggesting a fluid change.

As I see it, fluid test kits basically use one of two general techniques: I’ll call them “chemical” and “spot” testing. Both methods are simple to perform.

The Chemical Method

With chemical tests, fluid is placed on a test strip and creates a chemical reaction, changing the color of the strip. This technology is used by Acustrip and Phoenix Systems. These technical tests require different test strips to measure each fluid (like brake fluid, coolant or antifreeze in ATF) or contaminant (like moisture, wear metals or bacteria/mold). These kits have a shelf life of two to three years.

“A coolant test strip determines the pH (acidity) and glycol (freeze point) of engine coolant,” says Jeremiah Terry, VP sales and marketing, Phoenix Systems, LLC. “Low pH levels mean an engine cooling system is acidic or corrosive. Consider what battery acid does to metal ... ethylene glycol levels too high or too low may cause coolant to freeze and destroy the cooling system.”

Q. What are fluid test kits?

A. If you’ve ever got a blood test in your doctor’s office, you get the idea.

Basically, it’s like a nurse drawing blood and sending it to the test lab. But with automotive fluid test kits, there’s no long wait. Results are available immediately right in the shop’s service bay. The kits all work similarly: fluid is

Q. How does a fluid test kit work? Does it involve a lot of training?

A. The first fluid test kits in the automotive industry hit the market in the late 1980s, says Ron Schornstein CEO of Acustrip Company, Inc. But even earlier than that, some form of fluid test kit technology was first used in the railroad industry over 100 years ago.

Go online to read the full article

Contributing editor Phil Sasso answers additional questions online:

- How do I sell a shop owner on using fluid test kits?

VehicleServicePros.com/12168691

For additional products in this category, visit: VehicleServicePros.com/fluidtestkits



	Fluids				
	Engine Coolant	Brake Fluid	Transmission Fluid	Power Steering Fluid	Gear Oil
Acustrip	✓	✓			
Fluid RX Diagnostics		✓	✓	✓	✓
Phoenix Systems	✓	✓			

The Spot Method

With the spot method, a drop of fluid is placed on a test pad creating a pattern and color. One universal test pad can be used for transmission fluid, brake fluid, power steering fluid, motor oil and gear oil. There's no shelf life on these types of kits, so inventory never "spoils."

"It provides a measure of additive depletion and the total sludge and/or debris content in the fluid as correlated to laboratory analysis," says Ron McElroy, CEO of MagnaGuard, Inc. maker of the Fluid RX Diagnostic kits, which use the spot method.

In both cases, the resulting color and/or pattern are compared to a supplied chart. The results are easy to understand—even by the average shop customer who can plainly see if a particular fluid in his or her vehicle needs to be serviced.

No matter the method, once a test pad is used, it can't be used again.

Q. What's the retail price on a fluid test kit?

A. It depends on what you're testing. But most kits are sold to shops in bulk packages and run from \$0.17 to \$0.79 a test.

Some kits can be used to test multiple fluids. Others are fluid- or contaminant-specific. So, it's important that the shop owner be aware of his inventory.

Q. How reliable are these fluid test kits?

A. All the kits are reliable. That is, they all do what they say they do.

There is a question of scientific accuracy and industry standard. Some kits meet American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards and some meet other industry standards. But that's all outside the scope of this article.

From my perspective, all the manufacturers and kits mentioned (see chart below) provide at the very least an acceptable rule of thumb measurement and a marketing tool for independent shop owners servicing consumer vehicles.

"One of the most neglected segments of vehicle preventative maintenance is vital fluids including gear oils, transmission, power steering and brake fluids," says McElroy. "Adding fluid diagnostics to every multi-point inspection will up ticket averages and promote customer trust and confidence in preventative maintenance service recommendations."

Shops servicing commercial fleets also may choose to use fluid test kits in their Preventive Maintenance (PM) programs, at which point science and standards may be more important to the fleet owner/manager. Most fluid test kit manufacturers provide this technical data in their literature and on their websites. ^{PD}

			Contaminants		
Motor Oil	Exhaust Fluid	Fuel	Moisture	Wear Metals	Bacteria/Mold
					
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓					

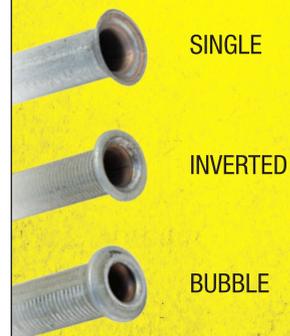


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