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When Aram Tatarian decided to switch to all digital platforms, it required getting buy-in from his staff before making the change.

# DIGITAL TAKEOVER

The secret to swift digital implementation— and ARO increases

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**Leading the Team**  
Aram Tatarian was met with some hesitation when he began the digital switch—but was able to lead his team to success.

**A**ram Tatarian moved his shop into the digital spectrum in Fresno, Calif., and was met with hesitation from his team members, as well as additional obstacles along the way. It turns out, even if you do have a plan, there are outside factors that come into play, despite the transition making sense in your head.

For Tatarian, becoming digital meant bringing his shop into the modern era—a move that was difficult for his team to get used to in the beginning.

“As a business owner, we have to be setting the vision for your business,” Tatarian says.

“What contributed to the increase is two things: the economy has turned around the last two years and there is some excitement in the market,” Tatarian adds. “The other thing was—I think they go hand in hand—we were able to connect with digital inspection and once we started really implementing that, we did notice a huge jump in repair order average and response from the customers was just very [eye-opening].”

Since moving into the digital spectrum, Tatarian has seen real changes in his shop floor and his process, increasing his former ARO of \$557, he says.

“The first year we implemented the digital inspection in 2017, our ARO jumped to \$715,” Tatarian says. “Last year, our ARO jumped to \$744, so we’ve seen increases every year with our ARO.”

When you take a leap of faith, sometimes things don’t necessarily work out, but with enough patience and faith in a process, it’s possible to make a shift in your business work. For Tatarian, finding success meant cross into new territory and jumping over obstacles along the way.

Tatarian shares instances of hesitation he was meant with when becoming digital, as well as how he was able to work through the process with his team.

**ARAM'S AUTO REPAIR**

**Location:**  
Fresno, Calif.

**Owner:**  
Aram Tatarian

**Staff:**  
5 (3 technicians,  
1 service advisor/  
manager, 1 office  
assistant)

**Size:**  
5,000 square feet

**Average Monthly  
Car Count:**  
120

**Annual Revenue:**  
\$1.1 Million

**“What we’re doing is successful; why do we need to change?”**

It can be hard to get out of your comfort zone when making a change in the business. For Tatarian, he wanted to stay ahead in the industry, but knew it meant tapping into an era that he was unfamiliar with: digital inspections.

“We wanted to be at the cutting edge of technology of what’s going on and what’s happening,” he says.

Tatarian didn’t grow up in the digital age, but he knew the opportunities that come with moving from paper to digital inspections could only grow his business.

“If you’re going to be a business in the future, you can’t wait for the future to get here before you get in it,” he says. “You have to get in it right now; if you wait too long, it might be too late.”

Although everyone might not be ready to take a leap of faith, it’s important to reiterate with your team why it’s important to try something new out with your team, as well as how you’re going to work to get there.

“You have to show as an owner that you’re invested in this and you want to see this implemented,” Tatarian says. “It’s not like the old days of, ‘If you don’t like it, you have to leave.’ You have to get your employees to be part of the solution.”

You have to be invested, he says.

“If you’re going to digital, you have to jump in there,” Tatarian says. “You will not be successful both ways—you have to make a decision and you have to move forward and find a way for your employees to buy into it.

“You can’t force somebody to do something if they chose not to do it.”

*Owner takeaway: When talking to your team about implementing a new procedure, explain your thought process behind it and discuss your plan.*

**“What happens if it doesn’t work?”**

Not everything will work out as planned, and it’s important to have a plan of execution when you’re met with failure. The first digital inspection tool Fresno Auto Repair tried was not successful. The program was hard to follow, his shop was not really instructed on how it works, and moving to a whole new inspection process was a lot for his team.

“It was very difficult to maneuver, set up and understand,” Tatarian says. “It did not fit with what we were doing and how we were running the shop.”

The key, he says, was that his manager buys into the product, otherwise it becomes a chore to sell the product to the employees.

Without abandoning the idea of implementing digital inspections altogether, Tatarian decided to check out a presentation by AutoVitals with his service advisor. The two spent the whole day meeting with the company and make the move to the new system. Once the team got onboard the product, the shop began to notice everyday changes, he says.

“The guys are getting more comfortable using the digital inspection,” Tatarian says.

*Owner takeaway: As an owner, you have to make sure your management buys into what you’re doing, otherwise other difficulties will arise.*

**“How long is it going to take us to get used to this?”**

After finding a digital inspection tool that Tatarian’s staff agreed with, the team decided to explore ways in which they could grow the ARO and reconnect with customers. In the past, the shop would inspect the vehicle, relay information to the customer regarding what they found, and then the customer would decide what service would be done.

“We’re here to take care of the customer and if we’re not doing the inspection consistently the same way, then we really are not doing them service,” Tatarian says.

Today, one new method that the shop has put an emphasis on is taking photos throughout the inspection process that are later presented to the customer.

“We were always inspecting the vehicles, but I think the difference is that pictures are worth a thousand words, and I don’t have to sell anything,” Tatarian says. “They have to make the decision to see what to do with their vehicle—it’s not our job to sell them stuff, it’s our job to give them the information they need.”

During each vehicle inspection, his staff takes time capturing photo evidence of “good” parts that do not need to be touched,

as well as “bad” parts, or ones that’s may need to be looked at further.

“If they bring their vehicle in today and four months down the road, [customers] can see the inspection from four months to now [and] they can see the difference,” Tatarian says.

In becoming digital, the team discovered the importance of connecting with more advanced customer base, he says.

“Today’s customers do the research on their own before they buy or purchase the product,” Tatarian says. “What it’s done for the shop is, instead of sending the customer to Google and having them Google what they need, we’re getting them all of the tools that they need to find the information.”

*Owner takeaway: Try to include your team in figuring out ways in which to change a procedure; when everyone has the ability to bring new ideas in, it becomes easier to determine the best possible procedure for your business.*

**“What do our customers get out of this?”**

In addition to digital inspections and communicating vehicle issues with customers, the shop has moved towards a more modern method of reaching customers—by text. Texting has allowed the shop to engage with customers more efficiently, Tatarian says.

“We are learning how customers respond because we all do the same thing,” he says. “When I go to purchase a TV, I go look around and see what’s what, and I go to Google and do a review search [to see] how good is this product.”

Communicating via text message has also allowed the business to bring in more customers and even change perspectives about the inspection process. Tatarian recalls a time where a customer was set on only getting a certain service done, but later changed her perspective after seeing provided photos from the digital inspection.

“When I saw the pictures I was sold,” he recalls the customer saying. “She was a new customer; there was no trust built yet, but the pictures sold the job.”

*Owner takeaway: Communicate with your team and keep track of results to determine how successful the new procedure is. +*