



**Gary Stamberger** – Training Director  
Magnaflow Exhaust Products

## GETTING THE MOST FROM TECH SUPPORT

The tools we use during the diagnosis of any problem with a vehicle have become numerous indeed. From the tool box they range from the simple to the complex. Hammers, wrenches and screwdrivers to volt meters, scan tools and scopes. Of all the tools at our disposal, Tech Support can be the most valuable.

The introduction of computer controlled systems and components have brought about an industry change of information sharing. This includes databases, training forums and tech support. Products such as Alldata and Mitchell On Demand (MOD) are information databases that provide much of the data needed to properly diagnose and repair many of today's vehicles. From troubleshooting charts to wiring diagrams, repair procedures and Technical Service Bulletins (TSB's), this information is gathered from the Manufacturers and displayed in one easy to navigate website.

Training has also taken on many forms. For years, Instructor Lead Training (ILT) was the most common and for many is still the most effective source of educating today's techs. However, technology has opened up many other avenues for the training community to get information to technicians in the field. Videos, webinars, and live streaming web based seminars are becoming popular. At the most recent Automotive Training Management Council (ATMC) conference held in Chicago, much of the discussion was about this latest use of technology. There was even discussion of the use of social networking as a viable way of exchanging information. Since we could spend a fair amount of time contemplating the pros and cons of these new training opportunities, I will leave that discussion for another time.

Now, let's look at Tech Support and how to get the most out of the information available. As with other information sources, Tech "Hotlines" also come in different forms. They can be Live or recorded. Some may use a dispatcher where you leave some basic information and someone will get back to you in a timely manner. Others will give you a laundry list of possible causes for your problem while some claim to have the "silver bullet" answer for most common problems. Manufacturers who offer Tech support, most often tag it to their customer service department and therefore will handle a complete array of issues.

When calling any Tech Support Line, the amount of information you bring to the discussion is directly related to the speed and accuracy of the diagnosis. In the case of a technical issue, other testing may need to be completed before a diagnosis can be reached, prompting more than one call. When a Tech is asked to perform a task, the results of that test may be all that is needed to determine a diagnosis or it may provide Tech Support with direction for the next test. We would all love to have the quick fix or silver bullet for a given problem, but more often than not it doesn't exist.

Having all the pertinent information about the vehicle and the problem can be a great aid in getting to the answer. Certainly there are the basics; Year, Make Model, Engine size and Drivetrain (2WD, 4WD, AWD, Auto or Manual) and any other significant data for the vehicle. Next, depending on the complaint, try to have available support information. If the vehicle failed an emission test be prepared to forward a copy of the test results. If the Check Engine Light is on, have any and all codes available as well as 'freeze frame' info. (December '09 Tech Bulletin) If it is a 'fitment' issue, digital pictures can really help in determining the problem and getting it fixed.

At Magnaflow, we understand the urgency you feel when you call our Tech Line. This business is all about repairing the vehicle and getting it out the door so we can get the next one in. However, we also know that getting it "right the first time" is the key to customer satisfaction. Good tech support depends on good information.

Cleaning up the environment...one converter at a time

Gary

