

# Do You Always Need to Send a Tow Truck?

What do the following have in common — the economy, automaker technology, the weather, and a harried consumer lifestyle? If you guessed these are things that affect trending in types of roadside assistance calls, you're probably one of those proactive business owners who already innovates in an effort to stay ahead of the competition.

Keep reading!

Last year, AAA handled nearly 30 million roadside assistance calls on behalf of 45 million members. A brutal winter in many parts of North America netted a marked increase in requests for jump-starts, flat tires and fuel. And things show no sign of slowing down. This summer, AAA-affiliated service personnel are projected to tow approximately 3.5 million cars and trucks; boost 1.3 million batteries; unlock 1.2 million vehicle doors; change 900,000 flat tires; provide fuel to 100,000 motorists that run out of gas; and extricate 50,000 stuck vehicles.

Another 340,000 motorists are anticipated to require miscellaneous roadside assistance from AAA. What does it all mean?

Well, if you're still only buying tow trucks for your mix of service vehicles, you might want to analyze your types of calls and see if adding a light service vehicle might be more cost-effective. You already know that insurance rates are at an all-time high, and at a whopping 7-mile-per-gallon average fuel consumption, tow trucks can be one of your largest profit drainers. Do you always need to send a tow truck?

To determine this, you need a reliable method of keeping track of your types of calls. Those with automation systems swear by them. Paul Best, owner of East Coast Towing in Garner, North Carolina, uses the Tracker management system. "We can see what's going on. We know where every penny and dollar comes from, and when there's a problem,



we find it...our dispatch system has been streamlined by leaps and bounds."

Systems like Tracker that has been developed by tow providers for tow providers can pay for themselves in no time.

AAA is shifting its emphasis of how calls are handled too. "We know that when members call they want more than a tow truck. They want AAA to minimize the inconvenience of a breakdown by solving their vehicle repair problem, if possible. Our network of Approved Auto Repair facilities and mobile AAA Battery Service providers has significantly advanced AAA's ability to be a complete automotive solution for vehicle owners," says Marshall L. Doney, Vice President, AAA Automotive. The traditional "hook 'em and go" method of solving a roadside breakdown is not always the best approach in today's environment.

So how can your business learn from these trends and increase profits? If you've read this far, you're probably willing to take a look at your current ideas and practices and consider using the technological innovations available to you today. Crunch some numbers, talk to your dispatcher and see if qualifying your calls a little differently might allow

you to mix in a light service vehicle as a result of these changes. An alternative to a tow truck such as a small-to medium-sized pickup truck or even a van would be ideal for changing tires, delivering gas and jump-starting batteries. Harried consumers certainly seem to be more likely to lock their keys in their car, run out of fuel, or even purchase a battery from you on the roadside.

This brings us to new business opportunities. Time is the new currency, and AAA service providers involved in the mobile battery service report high levels of member satisfaction because they've solved the problem the first time. Perhaps you can think of other ways to innovate? If you've got the expertise, consider adding a repair operation or commercial vehicle leasing option to your business.

One thing for sure, those that are open to watching trends and then harnessing available technology and business opportunities to create a greater return on their investments will have another thing in common — they'll still be around for an exciting future! 🚚

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