



# FUEL FOR THOUGHT

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## TOP 20 TRAITS OF A PROFESSIONAL TECHNICIAN

Courtesy of the head powersports instructor at a technical college, and yours truly

I HAD A GREAT CONVERSATION with Bob Monroig last month. He's the guy in charge of Lake Washington Technical College's powersports technical programs in Kirkland, Wash. We were discussing the industry's need for top-flight technicians and the behaviors that define professionalism in this line of work. We also talked about the college's new associate's degree program for motorcycle, marine and power equipment with a Harley-Davidson option (see sidebar),

Together, Bob and I have about 75 years of experience in the powersports business. Our backgrounds are similar, and I think our experiences led us to create a pretty comprehensive list of professional work habits and traits that few techs rarely perform to 100 percent satisfaction.

If you're a tech, these are the top 20 traits and work habits to which you should aspire. If you're a service manager or service writer, this is what your A-line techs should be doing every day. Are you ready? Here we go with our top 20 countdown of the desired traits and work habits of a professional powersports technician.

**20.** Protect fragile paint and plated pieces by wearing mechanic's gloves, using tank and fender covers, removing belt buckles, jewelry and chain drive wallets, polishing the

sharp edges on your flat-blade screwdrivers and placing chromed and painted parts shiny side up in soft containers like plastic bins.

**19.** Attach tie-downs to vehicles to prevent them from falling off the lift.

**18.** When changing oil, leave dipstick/oil cap on the hoist until oil is refilled. This reminds you to replenish the lubricant so you don't accidentally run the vehicle dry and do major damage.

**17.** Never use magnets on steel engine or drivetrain parts because they'll become magnetized and then attract metal debris that accelerates their wear.

**16.** Reinstall fasteners in their correct location. Keep track of their original order by inserting fasteners into holes poked into a piece of cardboard in the shape of the gasket.

**15.** Keep internal parts clean by placing them in bins or muffin tins. Use Ziploc-type bags for longer storage.

**14.** Preheat stubborn fasteners with Loctite on them before applying the wrench or socket. Most Loctite releases at about 400° F. A mini-torch works great for this. Watch out for flammables and soft parts! It's your fault, not ours, if you damage the vehicle by being careless with a device that produces over 2000° F!

**13.** Tap drain plugs lightly with a steel hammer at least 20 times to loosen them before removal.

**12.** Arrange one drawer of your tool box with tools needed to do a tuneup or service that you typically perform more than five times per week.

**11.** Unless the bearing is to be replaced, never tap on parts that are pressed into bearings because it brinnels them (creates indentations and flat spots) that leads to premature failure.

**10.** Wrap threads and sharp edges on shafts with transparent tape before installing seals over them to prevent scarring the soft material.

**9.** Always disconnect the negative battery cable first (unless it's an old positive-ground English bike).

**8.** Never wipe internal engine and drivetrain parts with shop towels or rags because their cloth fibers can contaminate internal bearings that can lead to premature failure.

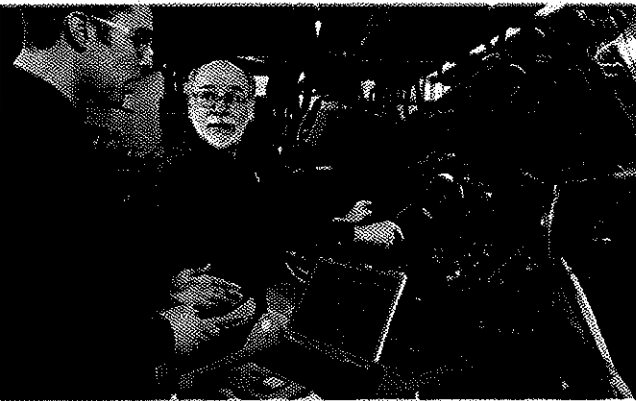
**7.** Do it right the first time by leaving parts that require torquing (critical fasteners, spark plugs and drain plugs) on a tray or clean towel until you're ready to permanently install them.

**6.** Use a job list for routine services, and check off each procedure as you go. If you're interrupted, you'll know exactly where to restart.

**5.** During the service, identify any additional work needed, especially safety-related issues. Then inform the customer and document the details on the repair order. It's not just a good practice; it's a legal responsibility and the easiest way to sell additional service and parts.

**4.** Pre-lube parts with the lubricating fluids they run with, unless the manufacturer says otherwise.

**3.** Remember that a customer notices a dirty fingerprint a lot more often than the subtle performance difference of a good tuneup. Clean the areas you were working around to eliminate your evidence.



Bob Monroig (right), head of the powersports programs at LWTC, assists a student with Harley-Davidson's Digital Technician testing equipment. Photo courtesy LWTC

# FUEL FOR THOUGHT CONTINUED

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2. Test-ride every vehicle to check your work and the vehicle's performance. Remember to pump up brakes after a tire change or brake service before you take off and ride cautiously on new tires that need scuffing in.

And now, the No. 1 thing a technician needs to do to be a top flight profes-

sional: **Take care of yourself.** There are many things you can do: Use safety glasses around moving objects and nasty chemicals, wear ear protection when the noise picks up, put on gloves when cleaning with solvents, chemicals and harsh soaps and open the door or use an exhaust system to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning when

running vehicles indoors. We want you to enjoy the fruits of your labor, and you can't do that if you're seriously injured. **D**

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## Technical College Gets OK for H-D Associates Program

Lake Washington Technical College, in Kirkland, Wash., has been training entry-level and experienced powersports technicians for more than 20 years. Starting this fall, the college is offering an associate's degree in Harley-Davidson motorcycle repair and maintenance in its Motorcycle, Marine and Power Equipment Service Technology program. To my knowledge, only one other college offers an associate's degree for motorcycle technicians, Fort Scott Community College in Fort Scott, Kan. Like Fort Scott, LWTC has the endorsement of the Harley-Davidson Motor Co.

LWTC's powersports program runs five hours a day, five days a week for six quarters — a grand total of 1,650 hours over the course of 18 months. The curriculum is divided into systems. For example, every type of charging system would be learned and then that knowledge applied to the powersports unit of choice. The Harley-Davidson option is, as expected, a 100 percent focus on that product and runs the last two quarters of the program. The powersports classes operate in a facility of 9,000 sq. ft. outfitted with the same special tools and equipment used to train dealership techs in Harley-Davidson University's PHD classes. Two-thirds of the training is hands-on, and the median age of students attending these programs is 26.

Tuition is \$5,800 for the whole 18-month program, not including cost of living. All in all, that's significantly less than other private institutions around the country. Registration has begun for the fall quarter, and interested parties can contact the college by calling 425-739-8300 or visiting [www.lwtc.edu](http://www.lwtc.edu).

— D.K.

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