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# Narrowing the Gap

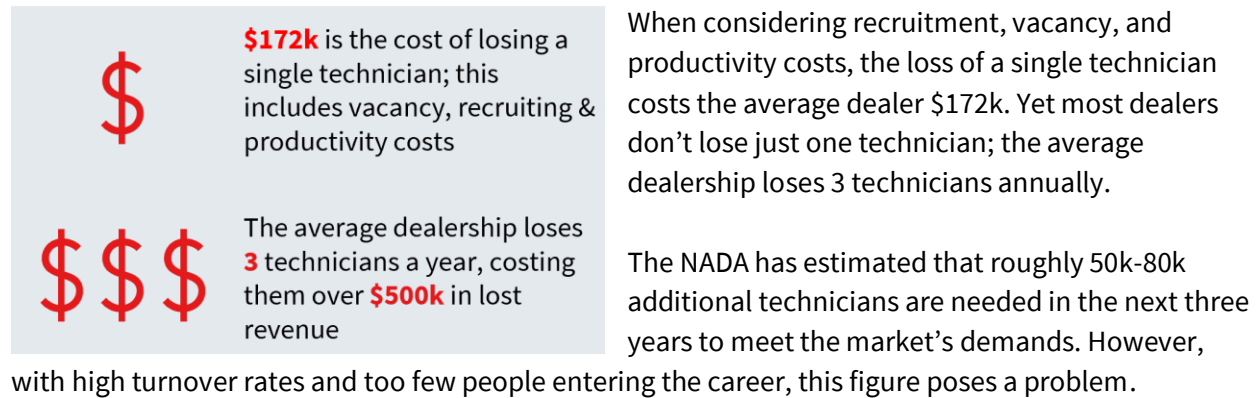
## *Women in the Automotive Technician Career*

Automotive Technician Collaboration

M. Collins, B. Murch Elliot & G. Prendergast

## Overview

Over the last several years, the automotive industry has been in crisis: technician turnover has been around 30% annually, technician net promoter scores average -49%, and overall poor career perception have left dealers and OEMs in the middle of a costly cycle.



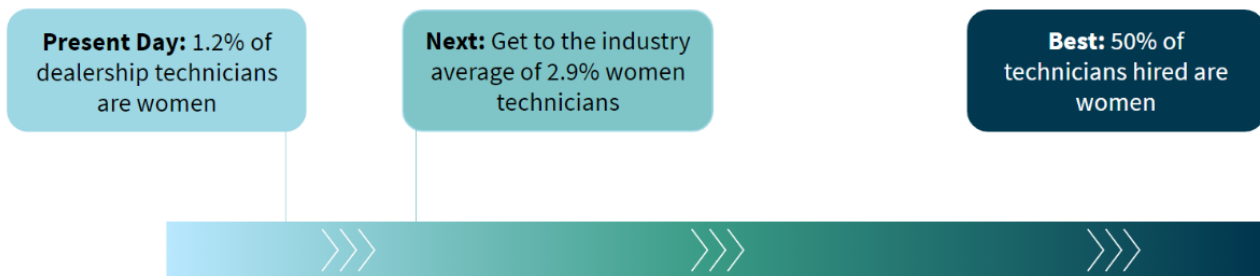
**\$** **\$172k** is the cost of losing a single technician; this includes vacancy, recruiting & productivity costs

**\$ \$ \$** The average dealership loses **3** technicians a year, costing them over **\$500k** in lost revenue

When considering recruitment, vacancy, and productivity costs, the loss of a single technician costs the average dealer \$172k. Yet most dealers don't lose just one technician; the average dealership loses 3 technicians annually.

The NADA has estimated that roughly 50k-80k additional technicians are needed in the next three years to meet the market's demands. However, with high turnover rates and too few people entering the career, this figure poses a problem.

One way to fill the gap is to increase the number of women automotive technicians at dealerships. The automotive technician career currently has the widest gender gap of all service personnel positions, with women making up only 2% of all automotive technicians. OEM dealerships trail the industry, with women making up only 1.2% of dealer technicians. If the industry could increase the representation of women to even 20%, this would add an additional 55,000 new technicians annually! However, the number of women technicians have remained static over recent years, meaning current recruitment methods are ineffective at targeting women.



For women who do enter the career, they are likely to face obstacles their male coworkers won't. They are more likely to be harassed by coworkers and customers, not taken seriously by dealer management, and passed over for promotions or leadership roles. All these factors impact women technician retention rates and are cited as reasons they leave the career.

To determine more effective recruitment methods, and to ensure the women who do enter the career are retained, Ducker Carlisle and the Automotive Technician Collaboration (ATC) conducted extensive research. These efforts included interviews with women technicians and their corresponding service managers, who were asked approximately 50 questions-- 17 pertaining to recruitment and the

remaining 33 categorized under retention. In total, 26 women technicians and their service managers were interviewed both virtually and in-person across 11 dealers from 5 OEMs.

In addition to the technician and service manager interviews, Ducker Carlisle analyzed data from the Automotive Technician Survey (ATS). The ATS had over 24k technician respondents, approximately 281 of which identified as female. Survey data represented 50 US states and 13 Canadian Provinces across 21 OEMs, asking over 300 questions with the primary focus on overall technician satisfaction.

With the results of the interviews and ATS analysis, Ducker Carlisle identified six main industry gaps – three in recruiting, and three in retention. The team then created recommendations for recruiting and retaining women, based on the identified gaps.

## Identified Gaps & Recommendations

### Recruitment

Historically, technician recruiting efforts haven't been focused on how to best engage with and interest women in the career. For dealers who want to grow their representation of women technicians in their dealerships, three key recruitment areas stand out as areas to address: job perception, prior training & experience, and support systems.

- **Job Perception:** The technician career has long been male dominated – technicians shown in recruiting materials, testimonials and representatives at career fairs are all men. This may actively turn some women away from the career, as they feel they might not be welcome in such a male dominated space. To be more inclusive and welcoming of women interested in the career, dealers and OEMs must update the image of the career, in recruitment materials and job descriptions.
- **Prior Training & Experience:** Traditional recruiting initiatives focus on love of all things automotive and fixing cars, which may turn away women who don't have prior experience. It can be intimidating to jump into a career that requires heavy training investment and upfront costs with little clarity on what it will be like. Improving accessibility of the technician career by offering learning opportunities for women can address these discrepancies.
- **Support Systems:** Parents are likely to steer their kids away when expressing initial interest in the technician career, due to outdated ideas of automotive technician career trajectory and salary expectations. Some families still consider this to be a “man's job,” discouraging their daughter or granddaughter from pursuing such a career. Dealers should engage entire families and offer support systems to connect interested women with the opportunities of the career.

### Retention

While many of the issues that contribute to dissatisfaction in the technician career for women are the same for men, there are some areas that impact women more. Our retention recommendations cover the three areas where we see the highest variance of satisfaction between men and women: management, dealer conditions, and career outlook.

- **Management:** Management is the most critical factor for retaining women technicians, with dealer management setting the tone for an inclusive environment. Establishing a foundation of equal respect, collaboration and zero-tolerance harassment policies ensures that management is positively impacting dealer culture.
- **Dealer Conditions:** Dealer Conditions play an important role in ensuring women feel welcome, valued, and included on the team. Providing dedicated amenities underscores that women technicians are valued and cared for at their dealer. Establishing inclusive benefits policies benefits both men and women technicians and allows technicians to better care for themselves and their dependents.
- **Career Outlook:** Career Outlook ensures that women technicians are supported through their careers and given opportunities to grow and advance. Facilitating growth at every level by holding frequent manager meetings and 1:1s creates a space for technicians to explore their career trajectory. Providing clear and transparent criteria for promotions and performance through merit-based promotions ensures that dealer management is reviewing all candidates equally, regardless of gender.

The recommendations were reviewed with current educators in the automotive technical training space to ensure our recommendations were impactful. The gaps and recommendations were finalized to create the **Women Technician Playbook** document. For more information on the **Women Technician Playbook** or the research that went into making it, please contact Meredith Collins at [mcollins@duckercarlisle.com](mailto:mcollins@duckercarlisle.com).