

# The Opportunity of Technology

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In a recent article that appeared in *Plant Services*, the author stated, “Despite the uncertainty of the global economy and the maturing of the computerized maintenance management systems/enterprise asset management (CMMS/EAM) software industry, companies from every sector continue to upgrade, replace, or buy new asset management software applications. This is especially true for asset-intensive industries because of the pressure to better manage ever rising asset life cycle cost...” Nothing could be truer of the car wash industry. Replacement plant, equipment and sites are reaching astronomical highs while at the same time pressure on prices and operating costs continue to climb, making it more and more difficult to produce meaningful bottom line results.

So what do you do? Where do you turn? And how do you do it economically and achieve a good return on investment?

This last year while the general car wash equipment business has been relatively quiet, the technology side has been busy listening, watching and developing relatively low cost solutions to improve the top line while remaining focused on the cost management side of the business.

Some examples of this can be found in the following:

1. Self Serve car washes:
  - a. Increased addition of credit card readers
  - b. Computerized control of operations and revenue tracking with the added benefit of WEB access and use of PDA and I-Phones
  - c. RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) and the opportunity to promote club, loyalty, and unlimited programs (see May issue of Modern Car Care article by Bobby Willis)
  - d. Use of WEB marketing and prepaid sales
  - e. Use of unattended bill or credit card sales kiosks for prepaid, re-charging, and loyalty wash facility cards
2. In-Bay Automatics:
  - a. Unlimited wash programs similar to that described above utilizing RFID technology and the opportunity for unlimited wash programs
  - b. Marketing and management of sites with web applications software and hardware
3. Tunnels:
  - a. Controllers that utilize WEB applications for ease of pulling performance data as well as the ease of timing adjustments easily made with your I-Phone
  - b. Biometric tools that eliminate fraudulent signing in of employees thereby giving better control over labor
  - c. No-fee merchant clearing house connections that give the owner freedom of provider choice
  - d. Loyalty and customer tracking programs that enable you to market to and track customers providing the ability to target market various customer bases
  - e. Unlimited automatic re-billing wash programs that assist the operator in minimizing the impact of the weather person and generating monthly revenue regardless of the weather
  - f. Increased usage of automatic tellers and lane management for faster throughput and customer convenience
  - g. The use of mobile hand held devices to sell services anywhere on site
  - h. The increasing use of license plate and licenses to build data bases through either card swipe or manual input to computers data bases

There is no question that technology is becoming an increasingly important player in assisting us to become more efficient and productive car washers. Technology capability is boundless, what you can imagine, if not here today is either in the works or soon will be!

So the goal, keep ahead of inflation and create wealth by maximizing the NOI (net operating income) of your sites. Technology isn't the total answer but it is a tool by which you obtain instant information that allows you to react and change!