

Diagnosing

USING THE RIGHT TOOL

Utilizing every tool in your work belt now includes your handy, dandy cellphone.

By Glenn Mellors



As we head into air conditioning season, we will be faced with the same old dilemma of not enough hours in the day. Too many calls and not enough technicians with good diagnostics skills. We start guessing and end up leaving a trail of follow-ups that never get scheduled. Revenue gets left unbilled or never collected. Sound familiar?

If we look for the root cause, we will find that over the last decade, there has been a shortage of people getting into our trade. A shortage of new blood means that the years of troubleshooting experience won't be passed on. It is harder and harder to find technicians that have had the luxury of learning from these senior technicians. Companies are lucky to have one or two of these people on staff to support the new generation. Rarely do companies have the luxury of having two to a truck for service calls. It just doesn't make financial sense.

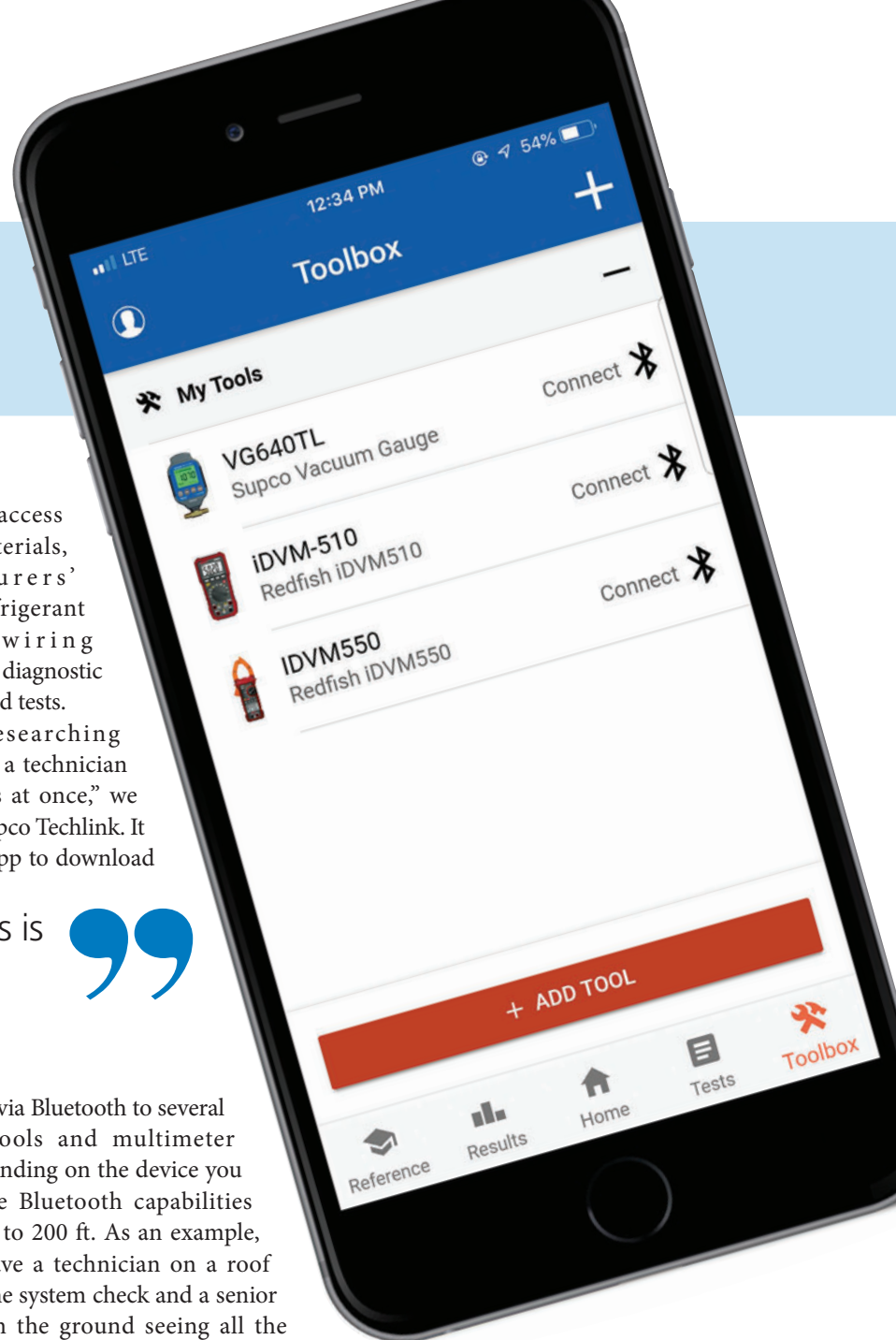
Seasoned technicians

The rookie technician is left to make decisions based solely on trial-and-error rather than why it failed. If they are afforded the luxury of communicating with the senior technician, communicating test results and findings may be difficult. This results in parts changing until we find the root cause of the failure.

If a lack of seasoned technicians is an issue,

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The [Supco](#) IDMV510 probe-type multimeter is one example of diagnostic tool contractors can use to save time on the jobsite.



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training seems to be the solution. How do you train a diagnostic technician in mid-season? How can we make them a productive revenue-generating service technician and not leave it to chance and parts changing? How would you like to have your junior technicians learning to be good trouble-shooters, riding solo, and sharing diagnostic findings accurately with a senior advisor without spending excessive time and money?

be used to access training materials, manufacturers' manuals, refrigerant charts, wiring diagrams, and diagnostic procedures and tests.

While researching "how to have a technician in two places at once," we discovered Supco Techlink. It offers a free app to download

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Well, now there is a way! This may not be the first or only solution, but while investigating a means to do this ourselves, we came across a unique solution that should save time and make you money. It should also help you develop better diagnostic technicians. This sounds a bit like a lead into an infomercial, but I promise you this isn't.

Power of the cellphone

Of all the tools we put into our technicians' hands, none are as powerful as the almighty cellphone. Like any other tool in your chest, when choosing a phone today, don't view it as a necessary evil only for communication. There are so many HVAC-related apps on the market today. The cellphone is one of our most cherished. The tool can be used to communicate with members of your team via voice, text, or email. You can also store files such as H&S manuals, MSDS sheets, and first aid and company employee manuals. More importantly for our industry, it can

and connects via Bluetooth to several diagnostic tools and multimeter devices. Depending on the device you purchase, the Bluetooth capabilities can range up to 200 ft. As an example, you could have a technician on a roof performing the system check and a senior technician on the ground seeing all the results in real-time.

The beauty of this app is that it is simple to use—a green technician will be testing on their own in just minutes. The results page is in the form of a dashboard indicating all the readings you could take or choose the simple test results page which indicates a pass or fail.

The devices we chose to utilize were the Supco IDMV510 probe-type multimeter and the IDMV550 clamp-on type multimeter. Each of these devices pairs automatically with the Supco Techlink. They are very rugged in construction, easy to read, large screen

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Having the ability to connect to your smartphone via Bluetooth allows for technicians to work in two different spots on a jobsite and both receive diagnostic results in real-time.

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multimeters with a price tag that doesn't break the bank. These products may not be alone in this category, but they are of great value.

Driving revenue

When searching diagnostic tools for your technicians, ask the supplier if the tools are Bluetooth enabled and come with apps that are designed to teach as well as test. There are many products out there that can train your technicians while driving revenue.

Gone are the days of worrying about how to "build the watch"—what we need are tools that get the job done effectively, accurately, and efficiently, so that when we repair, it won't result in a callback.

Some other great teachings and testing equipment are manifold gauges, temperature probes, velometers, and even a sling psychrometer. All of these products are

Bluetooth enabled and can share record results via text or email.

Technician tips

When performing a service call in the winter, ask for a glass of water with three or four ice cubes in it; leave it till you are finished and if the glass remains dry on the outside, sell them a humidifier.

With Canada still in its third wave of the pandemic, I suggest searching the app store for resources that allow us to keep one person/truck on the road. Not only is it safer but it also allows your company to cover more calls. There are several apps that will allow your technicians to do self-assessments every day (a government requirement for all essential workers) and record them so if in the future you are audited you will have the records you need. Just type "COVID screening" and you will find several options to choose from.

By utilizing the technology that is out

there, we will be able to create well-rounded diagnostic technicians in our trade for many years to come. This is one way to make sure that you are not just a parts changer company and that you are not leaving a trail of callbacks for the future. These tools, and many like them, can and will put profit back into your service departments. Do it right the first time. That is how we build loyal customers! +



Glenn Mellors was born into a plumbing family and started in the industry in 1973. He entered the HVAC side of the business in the 80s, working in wholesale, and then joined Lennox in 1992. In 2008 he joined the ClimateCare Co-operative Corporation, an Ontario contractor group, where he is director of training and implementation. Glenn can be reached at gmellors@climatecare.com.



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