

SELECTING DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS IS NO GAMBLE



-Maurice Donovan

When a workshop decides they are in the market for new diagnostic equipment and tools, an old saying attributed to Aldo Gucci comes to mind... "The quality is remembered long after the price is forgotten."

Our product test pilot and colleague Maurice Donovan from Allstate Autos has some good advice learnt from his own experiences with various diagnostic tools over many years.

Selecting a new diagnostic tool for your workshop need not be a gamble. Yet we often hear stories from workshop owners who are not satisfied with the unit they purchased or feel that it did not perform as well as the rep assured them. It also sometimes appears aftersales service is not what we expected.

Promises...Promises.

"Workshop owners or managers are so busy running their businesses that they need straight answers and not just sales speak."

- For me, first on the list is that I like to know that I am also buying quality aftersales service that is backed up by affordable upgrades and service throughout the life of the equipment. My existing scantool is getting past its use by date, but up until recently I had received exceptional service from my provider. Recently when dealing with my supplier my expectations were let down, although in the end after a lot of complaining they did rise up and meet my expectations. But unfortunately they did do some harm and may make me think twice about buying my next unit from them.

- Value for money. I will pay more if I see the value in what I am buying. If it is a scantool, I need to know that the updates are ongoing and the upgrade cost is either included in the buy price for a period of time or the upgrade cost are again good value for money. I currently pay for my scanner updates which include free warranty, so this to me is added value and made my want to keep my updates current.

- Any new equipment, scantools or diagnostic tool must meet the needs of the types of cars I work on. Some

brands of scantools have made a name for themselves "specializing", in certain vehicles, European, Japanese and so on.

- Before buying any piece of new equipment I do a lot of homework, while pricing is important it is still relevant to my expectation of quality and value for money, so I do not necessarily look for the cheapest price on the market.

- Another very important question I ask is will my new investment make me a return and if so how long will it take for me to recoup my outlay and how necessary is this equipment?

If my answers 'add up' so that I can get a good return, then I will prioritize and budget for this equipment. I do not believe in leasing or hire-purchase (although I have leased before and I do understand cash flow is very important) but for me I like to have the money up front, that way if we go into a downturn we are not going to get ourselves into trouble.

- Another important factor when buying diagnostic equipment and scan tools is to ensure we know why we need in this tool. Just like a multimeter, there are different capabilities and qualities on the market. Just because we own a multimeter doesn't mean we can use that tool when diagnosing a hybrid high voltage system (for example). So when we buy a multimeter we look at what we need in this tool and if we know we want to use this tool on a hybrid we are going to pay more and buy a CAT 3 1,000v rated meter. But of course, if we do not need this feature we can still buy a very good quality meter that is a lot cheaper.

- The same with our scantools. Some of us need a multi-function tool, that is a scan tool, lab scope, a multi graphing meter, a multimeter etc. There are a lot of scantools that have features we do not need or we simply do not use. Sometimes we buy the top of the range scantool thinking we only want the best, but find later it had features we simply do not require. A good scantool has to be able to meet our expectations, if not we have wasted money.

- Knowing I will soon be upgrading my old scan tool means I will have a certain expectations. Speed of the machine is definitely a high priority; each time my trusty Snap-On Modis is upgraded with new software I feel my machine slows down, well it certainly appears that way to me.

- I want almost instant boot up. I also know messing around with keys to use in

connection with the right DLC plug can be frustrating when there are so many keys to go through. Today's standard OBD2 DLC is a great improvement thanks to the USA laws legislating a standard DLC plug for all their cars, we have greatly benefited from this. Hi fi wireless OBD2 connectors would be high on my list as this means test driving a car without the hassle of the cable getting caught around my legs to be another benefit.

- As I have a separate Pico Labscope, I no longer need my scantool to operate as a lab scope, but if you were looking for an all in one scantool and lab scope, I would be particular that I had a 4 channel scope. If you only need a 2 channel then you may save some more by only looking for this on your desired tool.

- I would also make sure the sampling rate was adequate for our needs. If the sample rate was too slow we could miss out on some vital information that could cause us to miss that one in a thousand glitch that we need to see.

- The other issue of desire is the ability to use the scanner and the scope together. There are many other points of interest such as ease of use, touch screen, ability to record and then recover, Hi-Fi wireless networking with the Internet, weight and size, and the list goes on and on.

- Lastly I look at the resale value. Can I expect this equipment to have an acceptable resale value? Not that I intend to sell any of my new equipment, but I feel it is a valid question we must consider. I expect normal depreciation, but if the equipment exceeds normal depreciation it could be grounds to reconsider a different model or make. Again sometimes buying a product just on price may not be so cheap in the end. Ideally, if a supplier can leave a tool with a workshop owner for a few days to practice on, at least you and your staff could really get to know its functions and make a real evaluation, but this is rare.

The Bottom Line is, I am sure we all have our own preferences and the point I am trying to make is we need to list what we want in a diagnostic tool and then see what is on the market and find the closest tool to match your "features and functions shopping list."

If I can be of any assistance I can be contacted at Allstate Autos in Brisbane on 07 3265 5966.

25 Years Workshop Expertise



The increasing amount of electronics in vehicles makes ECU (Electronic Unit Control) diagnosis standard practice in the workshop. This also applies to simple maintenance work on modern cars, or resetting the service interval display. With its 25 years of experience, the KTS series from Bosch is the test equipment with the highest, and continuously growing, market coverage. Regular updates of the diagnosis data in the integrated ESITronic 2.0 software from Bosch ensure that the workshop always has up-to-date information at its disposal. It currently covers around 80 different types of electronic system from more than 150 vehicle manufacturers. Reliability per subscription: Bosch provides the workshop with around 350 new ECU diagnosis programs per main update.

Bosch's ESITronic software is claimed to be the world's most comprehensive technical information software, providing the workshop with the guided analysis necessary for fast, accurate fault diagnosis for all components. Importantly for the diagnostic technician, ESITronic 2.0 has the unique ability to switch from the identified error code in Diagnostic Mode to repair information in the Troubleshooting Mode.

The Troubleshooting Mode includes the following information:

- Functional description of the vehicle system being tested
- Relevant ECU/sensor wiring diagrams
- Connector pinouts
- Component locations
- Multimeter & Live data comparison to set data

Regular updates of the diagnosis data for over 180 vehicle makes supply the user with all the information they require.

In reality information is the most important diagnostic tool and to provide a workshop with a total solution, the expansive ESITronic 2.0 software is supplemented by an innovative Technical Support line. Here diagnostic software problems can be identified as a Bosch Technical support operator can view the workshops KTS scanner screen via online internet solution.

Bosch's vehicle system training completes the comprehensive support package to keep the workshop abreast of the latest automotive system innovations. Training programs on Diesel Common Rail and the latest Electronic Battery Management systems are now critical, as these systems are now becoming more common place on the vehicles that a workshop must repair.

OTC PC-VCi Upgraded and Updated

This unique Aftermarket automotive diagnostic tool developed in Australia brings together class-leading software and hardware onto the one tool.

The PC-VCi-DLX with its comprehensive vehicle coverage now comes standard with a high-speed 2-channel lab-scope and can be further upgraded to add a wireless gas analyser, diesel smoke meter or a snake-cam.

The recently upgraded PC-VCi sees a RAM upgrade meaning faster access to the programs that allow the technician to do their job better. And a move to a solid-state hard-drive which means faster boot up times and less time and money lost waiting.

The PC-VCi wirelessly connects to the internet and uses OEM level Xtended Mobility software to update itself. Every 15 minutes it checks the server to collect any updates waiting for it. Its internet capabilities mean you can access your technical repair data and order spare parts without leaving the vehicle. This is ideal for viewing wiring diagrams or identifying the part. The tablet uses Bluetooth to connect to the vehicle's diagnostic port module with a 50+ meter range. No cable tethering the technician to the car. It has an on-board swivel camera and can be used as a touch screen tablet or with the keyboard.

For troubleshooting, the PC-VCi can be remotely accessed anywhere in the world. The Melbourne based, IT team can remotely support PC-VCi's in Aussie workshops.

For further details or to organize a demonstration call Bosch Automotive Service Solutions (03)9544 6222.



Launch Wins Award

Launch has won the Award for "best new servicing product in the tools and equipment category" at the recent AAAA trade show for their new diagnostic tool Auto Diag.

If you can't justify a new scantool this may be the solution for you. Just purchase a X431 Auto Diag for \$109.00 and you can download any vehicle manufacturer available. There are 220 to choose from.

The X431 Auto Diag has the smallest diagnostic connector on the market.

Simply Download the terminal software through the internet at anytime. Customers need to provide their own hardware like a Smartphone or Tablet with iOS or Android system.

After being connected with mobile terminal through Bluetooth, it achieves the X431 products full diagnostic functions, which include reading DTCs, clearing DTCs, reading data stream, action test and special functions.

It's a new revolutionary diagnostic scantool which not only allows users to do full system diagnosis on vehicles but it is also the most keenly priced on the market at only \$109 + GST!

For further information call Launch Tech on 02 9729 2999 or www.launchtech.com.au

