

Business Maintenance Checklist

24-Point Inspection For Your Business

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Business Value

- ❑ Review your supplier and partner contracts. Are you being held hostage by having too few relationships? Are your terms as strong as they should be? Are your partners providing the level of value you need to remain successful?
- ❑ Map the competitive landscape. Who poses a real or potential threat to your business? This includes other tire dealers, corporate-owned retailers, warehouse stores, car dealers – even online vendors. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of each and how your business is able to compete and win business over them. And if you're not sure how to stay competitive against any one of them, determine the changes you need to make and get a timeline in place for it.
- ❑ Look at the numbers to identify trends in spending, fees, volume, etc. Sit down to review your year-over-year, month-over-month numbers line by line to identify ways to "sharpen the pencil" to make adjustments as needed.
- ❑ Audit your pricing strategy. Are you pricing your products and services appropriately? Be aware of the financial implications of your pricing strategy and determine if it still makes sense based on the current market conditions. Lowest price is but one factor in consumer purchase preference – what additional value do you provide (perhaps not promoting as much as you should be) that can help justify your current pricing strategy? Are your charges and fees in line with others in your area?

Facilities and Equipment

- ❑ Be sure you're using your space to its full potential. Look at the steps employees have to take to do routine tasks and find ways to minimize production time and increase efficiency. Consider the cost benefit of new equipment to help you do more faster. If you don't have the room or the funds to expand, squeezing more efficiency out of the space you do have can be like adding an extra bay.

- ❑ Inspect your equipment. Identify units that need to be repaired, replaced or removed, then set up a timetable to do so.
- ❑ Review your partner agreements to make sure you're getting the most from your equipment provider relationships. That might include taking advantage of training for your technicians, in-store displays, and other features or upgrades that may have been added since you bought what you have.
- ❑ Develop a maintenance schedule. That includes everything from cleaning or painting the interior and exterior of your space, to performing maintenance on your major equipment, to optimizing your inventory levels and storage.

Tax and Legal

- ❑ Hold your annual meeting for your corporation or LLC. It's a good idea to record written minutes of the meeting and any resolutions, which are then signed by your shareholders (corp.) or members (LLC).
- ❑ File your annual report. Check with the secretary of state's office to see the due date for you to file to avoid penalties.
- ❑ Review your business plan, paperwork and incorporation documents. Did you change your business name (like adding or removing a word), have changes to share distribution, or change/add locations? If so, check with your attorney to file an "articles of amendment".
- ❑ Confirm that your business structure still makes sense. If you started small but have grown since, talk to your advisors about the best incorporation structure for your operation in its current form. Be sure that you're also positioned well when it comes to potential future events, like selling or passing the business to others.

Online Reputation

- ❑ Google your business name in all its keyword forms. See what comes up and what may need addressed.
- ❑ Check your Google listing – what's missing? Are the hours current? Are the links accurate? Be sure it's updated.
- ❑ Search your business across Bing, Yahoo, Ask.com and Yelp as well. Update those as needed.
- ❑ Set up a Google Alert for your name, your business name, and other critical possible search terms. That way you can see what others post about you and your business to take action to minimize any damage – and to thank them accordingly.

Employee Handbook

- ❑ Review your employee handbook. If you don't have one, you can check out NFIB Small Business Legal Center's Model Employee Handbook, which has policies your small business can adapt and use.
- ❑ Take an inventory of the required information you need to provide your team members. At the very least, your handbook should contain:
 - Employment at-will disclaimer and statement on equal employment opportunity
 - Policy prohibiting unlawful discrimination and harassment
 - A section describing your policy for use of company property, privacy rules, and social media
 - A section on employment classification and overtime rules
 - A policy on family and medical leave (if you have 50 or more employees)
 - A section on safety
 - Disciplinary guidelines
- ❑ Be sure your company policies and procedures are updated. In addition to privacy rules, drug use, and dress code, the handbook should outline explicitly what employees can and cannot do with company property, like equipment, tools, vehicles, telephones, computers, and software. Other commitments and statements in this section could include an updated social media policy, a drug/alcohol-free environment policy, and an open-door policy (where employees are free to bring forward any concerns or problems they might have). It should also include clear statements about disciplinary action that results if any parts of these policies are violated.
- ❑ Consider revising your leave and attendance policies. First, be sure they are current with the daily-to-day practice within your

organization. Second, are they appropriate to attract the types of workers you want? If you have a tough time attracting new employees, you might consider allowing for flextime, job sharing and other considerations, then revise these policies accordingly.

Website

- ❑ Check through the pages to confirm your business information is current. That includes hours of operation, services, employee photos, and the year and date at the base of the page.
- ❑ Check your links. Make sure every live link on each webpage of your site is working properly. Confirm that your social links and additional information is on the website and working properly.
- ❑ Confirm site performance across device types. Does your "click to call" functionality work if people are trying to call you from their mobile phone? Is your phone number actively linked and easy to find on your home page? Also, check out your website on across Android, iPhone, tablet and desktop computers (even across browsers (Chrome, Safari, Internet Explorer and Firefox) to be sure everything looks great and loads well.
- ❑ Look for ways to improve your SEO (search engine optimization) strategy and performance. The world is becoming increasingly digital, and if you want to be found by customers, you need to be easy to find online when they're searching for what you offer.

Source: NFIB.com