

Equip Your Detail Department for Less Than The Cost of a Plasma TV?

Reconditioning Solutions



Kevin Farrell

I see many dealership customer lounges that are beautiful: gorgeous furniture, workspaces for business people, kids' play areas, and sometimes very large Plasma televisions for their viewing enjoyment. The average 60" Plasma TV costs around \$15,000. I recently realized that a very neglected detail department could benefit from an investment of even less than that, meanwhile returning tens of thousands. Here's how to do it for less than the cost of a 60" Plasma TV in your customer lounge.

What you really need

Assuming that you already have the space to work in, let's look at what is really needed in the detail department to make every car look showroom new. A detailer needs to see what they are doing if the cars are going to look great. Having the correct lighting is a must. Lights must be strategically placed in all work areas and be close enough to the vehicles so that they may be effective. Lights should be mounted on side walls and at the front and backs of each work bay. Fluorescent lighting will suffice, but investing in some metal halide lights will also aid in seeing imperfections on a vehicle's paint surface.

There must also be enough electrical outlets in each work bay so that extension cords are not being dragged around the car. Usually one or two outlets on each side of the work bay will be fine.

Equipment

Compressed air is a must for

detailing. In a free-standing shop, you will need a compressor and will have to route an air supply to each bay. In a detail shop that may be close to the service department, you can just run the air lines into the detail shop.

Detailing equipment musts are buffers, both high speed and orbital, a dry vacuum, heated carpet extractor, a large selection of the correct buffing pads, towels, and chemicals. In the wash bay, a pressure washer is preferred (heated is even better), a selection of wash mitts, brushes, and other small, inexpensive items to correctly prep the vehicles.

Estimated costs

Your biggest cost will be making sure the work areas have the correct light fixtures and outlets. Assuming you are not starting from scratch, adding some outlets and lights fixtures in a relatively small shop should cost less than a few thousand dollars. The equipment is vastly cheaper than the necessary

equipment needed for the service department or the body shop. If you have a 3 bay area, equipping each with buffers, pads, chemicals, towels, and other minor items will be less than \$1,000 per bay. Keep in mind that every work area does not need its own carpet extractor, air compressor, or pressure washer. The cost for one of each of those items would be roughly \$3,000 total.

With these rough estimates, the cost to equip your detail shop is still well below that \$15,000 Plasma TV. Another key item to look at is training. An investment that will pay for itself in no time and increase profits forever is proper training. A detail staff that is skilled and knowledgeable will help increase gross on every used car and turn that shop into a profit center. All this for less than that Plasma TV.

Kevin Farrell is the owner of Kleen Car Auto Appearance. He can be contacted at 888-302-6400.

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