AI Knowledge Management
Improving your service technicians' productivity

by: Jonathan Blakey, Technology Assurance Group (TAG)

Every single office technology dealer is being hit over the head with artificial intelligence (AI) hype. And while it is obvious that not every single AI startup will actually "change the world" or change the industry for office technology dealers as they promise, it would be foolish for us to ignore powerful technology like AI knowledge management, especially when it can help us thrive.

In this article, I will address how you can harness AI knowledge management to increase technician productivity, improve your customer experience and boost profits. But let's start with a question: What percentage of your technicians' time would you guess is spent working versus searching for documentation? The answer is 50%.

Good leaders do not micromanage. They hire great people, set clear expectations and get out of the way. However, in the office technology space, this approach to management can backfire.

Due to business owners' respectful intentions, when their technicians tell them, "It took 90 minutes to fix the issue," they do not ask, "But what specifically did you do, broken down into 15-minute intervals?" If a technician were to explain, he (or she) would say: "Well, first I had to research X. I tried it and it didn't work, so I had to research Y. But then I finally tried Z and that resolved the issue." However, most business owners simply accept that "it takes however long it takes."

They accept the learning curve for technicians and know that with more time on the job, more experiences and collaborative conversations with co-workers, they will grow in their capabilities. They assume the learning curve is a cost of technician training. Yet, with AI knowledge management, all that knowledge acquired through research by individual technicians can be centralized, collected and understood by a central repository that has the ability to transfer that knowledge to other technicians.

AI knowledge management is so powerful because it aggregates all the great ideas your team comes up with and ensures that every technician has access to that level of expertise at the moment he needs it. Effectively, every technician can rapidly become an expert technician. If any one of your techs can figure it out, all of your techs have the answers at their fingertips, without the clutter, misinformation and noise on the wider internet.

This is one of the ways you truly begin to outgrow your competition because your technicians' learning curves are much faster than your competition's. After all, if your techs are still
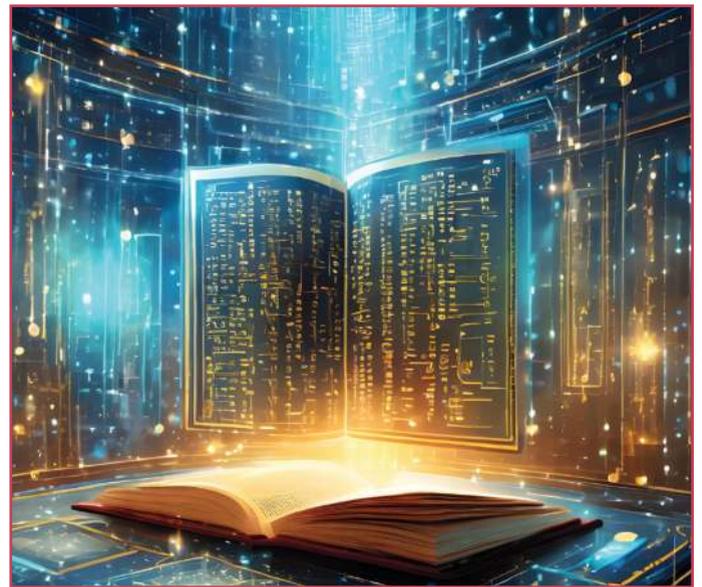
"Googling it," what competitive advantage do you really have over a newer, hungrier startup?

Technicians face myriad challenges daily, from diagnosing obscure error codes to sourcing the right parts for quick repairs. AI knowledge management serves as a repository of valuable information, constantly learning and evolving to provide technicians with instant access to solutions, best practices and troubleshooting guides.

When AI knowledge management is set up properly, it can understand and respond to technicians' questions in plain language. This means that instead of sifting through manuals, technicians can simply ask the AI questions and receive instant, relevant answers.

For instance, a technician might ask, "What does error code E020 mean?" and the AI can provide a detailed explanation and solution steps. The magic here is that it is so simple they will actually use it. And if your team is using it, it is getting smarter, more efficient and robust.

Without AI knowledge management, the asset of technician expertise resides inside the minds of your staff members — who can get sick, quit, go on leave, etc. — instead of retaining that asset within your company infrastructure. With AI knowledge management, you retain those assets and add a multiplier to all future human capital.

While this benefit cannot be overstated, the most immediate

benefit is that it turns 45 minutes of research into three minutes of research. Multiply this productivity increase by your headcount/number of service tickets and you will understand why we at Technology Assurance Group are so passionate about sharing this information.

As the owner of an office technology dealership, the benefits are huge, but we know you are constantly looking for ways to stay ahead of the competition, improve service quality and boost your bottom line. Here is a more detailed look at why this technology is crucial at this point in time and what the future holds for those who embrace or ignore this technology:

■ **Enhanced Efficiency & Productivity:** AI knowledge management centralizes all the critical information — manuals, service logs and troubleshooting guides — into one easily accessible digital repository. This means your technicians can quickly find solutions to even the most complex issues, reducing downtime and increasing the number of service calls they can handle daily.

■ **Consistent, High-Quality Service:** With AI providing standardized solutions based on the latest data, your customers will experience uniform, high-quality service regardless of which technician they encounter. This means they do not have to face one of the most ubiquitous and frustrating issues every customer faces — repeating themselves over and over again to new staff members. This consistency builds trust and strengthens your reputation, not to mention makes it much easier to scale.

■ **Accelerated Technician Training:** New technicians can quickly become proficient by accessing AI knowledge management, which serves as a virtual mentor they can have conversations with. This reduces the training period and allows your team members to be more productive sooner. Their technical skills will rise more quickly to match the level of your best technicians.

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■ **Cost Savings & Revenue Growth:** Improved efficiency and faster resolution times translate to lower operational costs and higher profitability. Additionally, satisfied customers are more likely to remain loyal and recommend your services to others, driving revenue growth.

While the prevalence of AI is widespread and largely overstated, office technology dealers need to understand the impact that AI knowledge management can have on their businesses. The decision to implement an AI knowledge base for your technicians is more than just a technological upgrade, it is a strategic move that can secure the future success of your company.

By embracing AI, you position your organization as an industry leader, improve service quality, improve the customer experience and significantly enhance your bottom line. Do not let your dealership become the modern equivalent of the fax machine in the age of the internet (or at least do not let yourself be quoted saying you "don't need AI"). Embrace this aspect of AI today to ensure you thrive in the rapidly evolving landscape of office technology. ■

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