FROM DEALERS, FOR DEALERS

11 ways equipment dealers add revenue.

Plays we've picked up from equipment dealers themselves, at dealer conferences and across the counter: where the margin actually lives, how to sell the same machine twice, and which call lists print money. Each one comes with the steps to run it. None of them require new software.

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1. Sell the machine at cost. Sell the schedule at margin.

The dealer with the sharpest machine price usually wins the deal, so stop defending machine margin and move it. Price the machine near cost, and make the deal conditional on a maintenance agreement: scheduled visits, wear parts, priority bench time when it breaks. A $99-a-month plan is about $1,200 a year. Over the eight or ten years that machine lives, that's more than you were ever going to make on the box, it comes in every month instead of once a decade, and when the machine finally dies, the customer doesn't shop around. You've been in the building every quarter.

RUN IT

- Write one plan, not five: quarterly visit, set discount on wear parts, priority scheduling, and a monthly price. Simple enough to explain at the counter.
- The discipline rule: no schedule, no cost pricing. If they won't take the plan, the machine price walks back up. Otherwise this is just a discount.
- Quote the plan price monthly, never yearly. $99 a month sells; $1,188 a year gets thought about.

2. Turn detergent into a subscription.

Soap runs out on a schedule you can predict from what they wash and how often. Put your regulars on a standing order and route the deliveries. The margin is steady, but the quiet win is the visit itself: your driver is in their building every month, standing next to your customer's equipment, while your competitor waits for the phone to ring.

RUN IT

- Pull your top twenty soap buyers from last year and call them. The pitch is one sentence: same soap, showing up on its own, locked price for the year.
- Size the order at the sale: ask how many gallons a week the machine will run and set the standing order right there.
- Give the driver a thirty-second checklist: hours on the machine, anything leaking, anything duct-taped. Every delivery is a free inspection and half of them turn into service tickets.

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3. Attach a care plan to every machine sale.

The moment a customer buys a machine is the moment they trust you most, and it's the cheapest moment to sell them protection: coverage past warranty, scheduled checkups, no surprise repair bills. It protects them, it funds your service department between breakdowns, and it puts a date on the calendar when you'll see them again.

RUN IT

- Quote every machine with the plan already on it and let them take it off. Opt-out beats opt-in by a mile, because removing protection feels different than adding cost.
- Track your attach rate weekly. If your counter isn't attaching on at least a third of new machines, the problem is the ask, not the product.
- Consider first year included on bigger machines. It costs you one service visit and trains the customer to expect scheduled care, which is what renews.

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4. Work the old-machine list.

Every machine you've sold is aging on a clock, and somewhere in your records is the list of who's holding one that's due. On average, dealers we've worked with are sitting on about 2,600 customers with a ten-year-old machine, and most of them haven't heard from the shop in months. The machine is getting replaced either way. The only question is whether you call before your competitor's ad does.

> **RUN IT**
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> - Build the list from your sales history: every machine sale ten or more years old, minus anyone who's bought or serviced in the last two years. Half an hour in QuickBooks gets you a rough version.
> - Sort by original ticket size and start at the top. The call is soft: "Your machine's coming up on ten years. Want us to look at it before your busy season?"
> - Date every touch and redo the pull quarterly. The list is a snapshot; machines keep aging.

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5. Run a trade-in flywheel.

"Let me take that old unit off your hands. I think I've got a buyer for it." The trade-in credit is what closes the upgrade, and the used machine becomes a second sale to a customer who couldn't touch new. One machine, two deals, and the used buyer just entered your world: soap, parts, service, and their own upgrade in a few years.

> **RUN IT**
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> - Know your used market before you price a trade: what did your last three used units actually bring? Offer trade credit off that number, not off hope.
> - Set a refurb cap, something like a quarter of expected resale. Past that, part it out instead.
> - Keep a "used wanted" list at the counter. Every price shopper who walks on a new machine goes on it, and now your trade-ins are pre-sold before they hit the floor.

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6. Quote three machines, not one.

Put the top-of-the-line unit on the quote first, the one that does everything. Then the middle machine: "honestly, for what you're doing, this is all you need." Then the small stuff rides along: hoses, wands, a case of detergent to start. The big machine isn't there to sell. It's there to make the middle one feel like the sensible choice, and the add-ons feel like rounding. One option is a yes-or-no. Three options is a which.

> **RUN IT**
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> - Build good-better-best into your quote template once, so it's zero extra work per deal.
> - Price the middle machine at roughly two-thirds of the top one. Too close and there's no relief; too far and the top one reads as a joke.
> - Preload the add-ons on every quote and let them cross off. Same psychology as the care plan: removing feels different than adding.

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7. Own the seasons.

The first hard freeze cracks a pump on every machine that wasn't winterized. The first warm Saturday kills every engine that sat all winter. Those two weeks are the easiest calls of the year, because you're calling to save the customer money, and they know it. A winterization list in October and a startup list in March is found service revenue from customers who thank you for calling.

> **RUN IT**
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> - Build the list once: everyone who bought or serviced an outdoor unit with you, ever. That's the whole qualification.
> - Price it as a flat package so the yes is easy, and book the visits as route days by area (see the route play below).
> - Track the no-answers. A customer who skips winterization and calls in January with a cracked pump is a replacement conversation, and you already have their file open.

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8. Charge for the loaner.

When a customer's machine is on your bench, their business is down, and they're glad to pay for a loaner that keeps them running. Run the same small fleet as try-before-you-buy rentals, with rental money applied if they purchase. The fleet pays for itself, converts renters into buyers, and gives your used trade-ins one more life before resale.

> **RUN IT**
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> - Start with two or three clean trade-ins, not new stock. The fleet should cost you almost nothing to stand up.
> - Set the day rate off what the local rental house charges, and apply up to a month of rental toward purchase.
> - Card on file, every time, plus a one-page damage sheet. The paperwork takes five minutes and saves the one dispute a year that sours you on the whole idea.

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9. Fill trucks by zip code.

A tech who does five stops in one part of town beats a tech who does three across the county. Same truck, same wages, more billable hours. Group your maintenance visits by area and tell customers "we're on your side of town Tuesdays." Most customers don't want a random day; they want a day they can count on. Route density is the closest thing to free margin a service department has.

> **RUN IT**
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> - Tag every service customer by zone and assign each zone a weekday. That's the whole system.
> - Offer the zone day first when booking. Break the route only for down machines, and say so out loud: "we can do Thursday, or if it's down we'll come tomorrow."
> - Measure stops per truck per day for a month before and after. That number is the raise you just gave yourself.

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10. Put a monthly number on every quote.

A $7,000 machine is a fight. A couple hundred a month is a maybe. Put financing on every machine quote, printed right next to the cash price, without waiting to be asked. Asking for financing feels like admitting money's tight, so most customers won't. Printing it on every quote removes that, and it quietly upsells: the monthly difference between the machine they came in for and the one they actually need is lunch money.

> **RUN IT**
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> - Set up with an equipment finance company or your OEM's program once, then make the monthly line a standard field on the quote template.
> - Use the gap to sell up: "$34 a month more gets you the bigger pump you'll want in year two."
> - Never lead with it in conversation. It's on the paper, doing its work; you talk about the machine.

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11. Pay your techs for leads.

Your techs stand inside more customer buildings than any salesman ever will, and they see everything: the competitor's machine in the corner, the duct-taped wand, the second location nobody mentioned. Customers also trust techs in a way they'll never trust a rep, and they ask them what to buy. A spiff for every tech lead that closes turns your service department into a sales force that's already through the door.

> **RUN IT**
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> - Define a lead in one line: machine past its prime, a competitor unit on site, a second location, or "they asked about upgrading." One form, thirty seconds, paper or phone.
> - Pay on close, pay real money ($50 to $100 or a cut of margin), and pay publicly. The first tech who cashes a spiff check in front of the others recruits the rest for you.
> - Spiff care-plan signups on service calls too. A tech who just fixed the machine is the most credible person alive to sell protecting it.

Count what they have in common

Almost every play on this list runs on the same fuel: knowing who owns what machine, how old it is, and when somebody from your shop last touched it. The maintenance schedules, the old-machine list, the seasonal calls, the trade-in pipeline, none of it works from memory and a filing cabinet. Clean records first. The plays follow.

Rough out what your old-machine list is worth: mybucketcrm.com/goldmine-calculator