Dealership Readiness Self-Assessment

This self-assessment is designed to help an automotive dealership objectively evaluate its readiness to establish and sustain a service technician apprenticeship program. It goes beyond intent and examines capacity, culture, structure, leadership, and discipline, the factors   
that determine success or failure.

* It tests organizational readiness, not just desire.
* It surfaces *hidden constraints* (dispatching, mentor bandwidth, pay-plan friction).
* It’s designed to support a go/delay/redesign decision, not just a yes/no.

## How to use this tool

* Each section contains diagnostic statements. Score each statement from 1–5:
  1. = Not true at all
  2. = Rarely true
  3. = Sometimes true/inconsistent
  4. = Mostly true
  5. = Consistently true/embedded practice
* Complete it **as a leadership team**, not individually. It is recommended that you ask each team member to score the assessment on their own and then meet to reach consensus. Spend your meeting time discussing the metrics with a wide range of scores.
* Score conservatively. Apprenticeship programs fail more often due to overconfidence than to a lack of intent.
* Pay special attention to mentor readiness, shop discipline, and leadership patience. Those are the most common failure points in the field.
* Review section totals and the interpretation guide at the end.

**Section 1: Strategic Clarity & Leadership Commitment**

This section determines whether the program is a strategy or just a staffing reaction.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ We have a clearly articulated reason for creating an apprenticeship program   
    (not just “we need techs”).
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Ownership and executive leadership support long-term technician   
    development, even when short-term productivity is impacted.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The service manager believes training is part of the job, not a distraction  
    from production.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Apprenticeship goals are aligned with dealership growth, retention,   
    and OEM requirements.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ We are prepared to fund the program for at least 24–36 months before   
    expecting full ROI.

**Section 1 Score (max 25):** \_\_\_ / 25

## Section 2: Service Department Stability & Operational Discipline

Apprenticeship magnifies existing strengths and weaknesses. Chaos will be exposed.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Our shop has consistent processes for dispatching, inspections,   
    and quality control.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Workflow is predictable enough to assign repair orders appropriate for learning.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ We are not constantly in “crisis mode” due to staffing or scheduling breakdowns.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Our comeback and rework rates are understood, tracked, and actively managed.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ We have the discipline to protect training time even during busy periods.

**Section 2 Score (max 25):** \_\_\_ / 25

## Section 3: Mentor Availability, Capability, & Willingness

Mentors are the single most important success factor.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ We have at least one qualified technician per apprentice who is capable  
    of mentoring.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Potential mentors demonstrate patience, communication skills,   
    and professionalism.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Senior technicians generally support developing younger or less   
    experienced techs.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ We are willing to formally recognize and incentivize mentors for their role.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Mentors have (or can be given) time in their schedules to train, not just   
    “answer questions.”

**Section 3 Score (max 25):** \_\_\_ / 25

## Section 4: Capacity, Work Mix, & Learning Opportunities

Apprentices need the right work at the right time, not random overflow.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Our shop has sufficient maintenance, brake, tire, and inspection volume  
    to support early-stage apprentices.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ We can gradually expose apprentices to more complex work without   
    overwhelming them.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ We can control which RO types apprentices are allowed to work on   
    at each stage.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ We have stall space and equipment that can be used for training without   
    disrupting throughput.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ We can rotate apprentices rather than leaving them in one role indefinitely.

**Section 4 Score (max 25):** \_\_\_ / 25

## Section 5: Training Structure & Learning Design

Intent to train is not the same as having a training system.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ We can define technician skill levels
2. \_\_\_\_\_ We are prepared to use a competency or task matrix rather than “time served.”
3. \_\_\_\_\_ We can document skill sign-offs and progression consistently.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Training expectations would be clear to apprentices, mentors, and managers.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ We have access to OEM, online, classroom, or external training resources.

**Section 5 Score (max 25):** \_\_\_ / 25

## Section 6: Compensation, Pay Progression, & Tools

Misaligned pay plans are a common apprenticeship failure point.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ We are willing to pay apprentices hourly (or with protected pay) during   
    early learning stages.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ We can define wage progression tied to skills, milestones, or certifications.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Our pay plans will not punish mentors for training time.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ We can incentivize mentors to train for quality.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ We are open to supporting apprentices with tool allowances, starter kits,   
    or financing options.

**Section 6 Score (max 25):** \_\_\_ / 25

## Section 7: HR, Legal, & Risk Readiness

If it isn’t documented, it will eventually become a problem.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ We can create written job descriptions and apprenticeship guidelines.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ We understand applicable labor laws, wage rules, and safety requirements.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ We can provide consistent performance evaluations and feedback.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Insurance and liability considerations for apprentices have been reviewed.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ We have HR capacity to support documentation and compliance.

**Section 7 Score (max 25):** \_\_\_ / 25

## Section 8: Recruiting, Selection, & Onboarding Discipline

A weak selection process creates expensive failures.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ We know what attributes we want in an apprentice (beyond “wants to be a tech”).
2. \_\_\_\_\_ We have recruiting channels beyond general job boards.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ We are prepared to realistically preview the job and career path to candidates.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ We can assess attitude, reliability, and coachability, not just interest.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Our onboarding process sets clear expectations from day one.

**Section 8 Score (max 25):** \_\_\_ / 25

## Section 9: Culture, Accountability, & Feedback

Apprentices succeed in cultures that value learning and standards.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The shop culture supports questions and learning without ridicule.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Standards and procedures matter more than “getting it done fast.”
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Apprentices would receive regular, constructive feedback.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Mentors and managers are held accountable for development, not just output.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ We are willing to remove apprentices from the program if standards are not met.

**Section 9 Score (max 25):** \_\_\_ / 25

## Section 10: Measurement, Patience, & Continuous Improvement

What you don’t measure, you can’t manage.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ We can track apprentice progression, quality, and retention.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ We are willing to pilot with a small group before scaling.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Leadership understands that productivity gains come later, not immediately.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ We are prepared to adjust the program based on results and feedback.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ We see apprenticeship as an ongoing system, not a one-time initiative.

**Section 10 Score (max 25):** \_\_\_ / 25

## Scoring Summary

* **Total Possible Score:** 250
* **Your Total Score:** \_\_\_ / 250

## Readiness Interpretation

* **210–250 (High Readiness):** Strong foundation. You’re well-positioned to launch   
  and sustain an apprenticeship program with manageable risk.
* **170–209 (Moderate Readiness):** Promising, but gaps exist. Address low-scoring sections before launching.
* **130–169 (Low Readiness):** Significant risk. Focus on stabilizing operations, mentors,   
  and structure first.
* **Below 130 (Not Ready):** An apprenticeship program will likely fail or create unintended damage. Stabilization and leadership alignment are required before proceeding.

## Critical Insight

Low scores in **Sections 1**, **3**, or **9** are **deal-breakers** regardless of total score. Apprenticeship is   
about leadership and culture first, and training second.

This assessment is intended to support thoughtful decision-making, not to discourage   
development. The strongest programs are built deliberately, not reactively.

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