

## SCHEDULE MAINTENANCE Vs PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE – WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

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I am often confronted with frowns when I speak of Preventative Maintenance for commercial vehicles having to be an integral part of the vehicle safety protocols, and that it is not the same thing as regularly scheduled maintenance procedures.



**"But they do the same thing, and why should I pay for something I already have?"**, is the question I am often confronted with. So what are the differences, and what different outcomes do they achieve? Let us decipher the mystery.

Your brand new truck, a R1.5 million investment, comes with all the bells and whistles, the shiny rims, the spectacular paint job, as well as the maintenance plan. Ah! The service plan, maintenance plan, whichever we wish to call it, is designed and offered by the manufacturer's distributor as a peace of mind deal. Something to take care of the hassle of vehicle maintenance, the untimely breakdowns, and the horrible cost of spares and labor. It's all in there. Yay! Brilliant! So it's all taken care of, right?



Wait a minute! No, wait a few days, because that is how long it would often take if you investigate that maintenance contract, read all the fine print, and for you to figure out what is covered and what is not covered. We must remain mindful of the fact that the offering of the maintenance plan is very much a means of manipulating a buyer into a purchase, hence the differences that exist in the maintenance plans of the various manufacturers. By offering an extra feature here or there, or a component which is covered which may not be the case with another manufacturer, buyers are often lured into changing there

brand loyalty. Yes, the service or maintenance plan is a big deal when you buy the truck, and so it should be.

But the maintenance plan, as great as many of them might be, performs only two basic functions. It offers a standby facility for after hours breakdowns, and it gives you a place where you can send your fancy truck for its regular lubes and services. And this is where it gets tricky.

Within the major centres of South Africa where these service centres are located, there is often only one or two service centres that has to cope with all of the scheduled services of the potentially hundreds of clients that wish to have their vehicles seen to. Schedules are therefor notoriously tight, and often frustrations are experienced due to lengthy periods of time where vehicles are standing, simply because you are not allowed to run up distance over the scheduled service odometer reading. Unless you have very tight control over your fleet and have the agreement of the manufacturer to allow you some leeway, your truck will stand while it awaits it's turn. A standing truck is losing money.



Further to this, and partially due to the pressure to move vehicles through the workshop, technicians are often scheduled to perform their services within a specific period of time. Taking too long on a service is unacceptable, as once again, time is money. As good as many of the technicians are, they often perform under pressure to get through as many trucks in a day as possible.

In this environment, someone suffers. It is not the service centre, I assure you. Along with all of the other repairs they are faced with, your truck is as much a priority as the next one. These are the realities of the world we live in.

It is therefor not surprising that small defects are then often overlooked and missed. Defects which has the potential to endanger the driver and other road users, or to have the vehicle debilitated next to the road in an embarrassing and unfortunate manner. Either way, it can be expensive. Your clients often do not wish to hear your reasons for a late delivery. That is not what they are paying for. This is where your wonderful service plan falls flat on its back, and where



properly designed and Managed Preventative Maintenance Systems come into effect.

Prevention is better than cure, and no truer a word has ever been spoken. But does it work in the Transport Industry? And if it does, why are people still confusing regular maintenance with Preventative Maintenance? After all, the clue is in the name itself. It is preventative in its very nature, in that it is supposed to prevent certain unpleasant things from happening. Here is the philosophy that drives Preventative Maintenance.

Every incident, be it an accident or a breakdown, is the result of a series of events. Nothing "just happens". Recently a fleet owner stated to me, after asking him about how an accident happened that destroyed one of his trucks, and his statement was that "shit happens". No Sir, shit does not happen. It is caused. Either by the lack of procedures, or due to existing procedures not being effective or being adhered to. When an accident or a defect occurs, it is the culmination of a series of undetected events which then results in the main event. If anyone intervened and changed as little as a single event in the chain of events that led up to the incident, then the accident or main event could have been avoided.



Preventative Maintenance fills this gap in regular servicing schedules. It actually looks for, and often finds, the little things that slip past our awareness, that we fail to detect, simply because they are often not as apparent as we would think them to be. Hence the question, "what happened", when things go wrong. The fact that this process really does detect faults before they become expensive breakdowns is the economic value inherent within the process. It saves you money by pre-empting potential problems before they cost you money.

In a following article, I will write about the role Preventative Maintenance plays within an environment where vehicles are subject to a service or maintenance plan, as well as when no such plan is available.

Your service plan is good, but for servicing. Not for preventing defects. We will also discuss the benefits of Preventative Maintenance from a safety perspective in a later article.