



## 10 Ways Fleet Maintenance Software Can Help Manage Costs and Boost Profitability

### A Buying Guide for Choosing the Right Program

*Kenworth offers this information to help truck fleet operators with their own maintenance facilities reduce parts inventory, decrease operating costs and increase productivity. This article provides tips on what to look for when choosing the right fleet maintenance software and selecting add-on features that will make sense for their operations.*

KIRKLAND, Wash. – Truck fleets with their own maintenance shops are under increasing pressure to maximize mechanic and technician productivity and minimize parts inventories, particularly in the current challenging economy. By accomplishing these objectives, companies stand a better chance of gaining a competitive advantage and boosting profitability.



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“Gathering and sorting through a myriad of information to achieve those objectives, while still directing day-to-day operations, remains one of the biggest challenges facing fleet maintenance directors and shop supervisors,” said John Wisdom, director of customer systems for Kenworth PremierCare® Connect. “A good maintenance management program can help. It allows managers to track the time taken by mechanics or technicians to perform tasks, such as preventive maintenance and general repairs. Users can also track parts purchasing and inventory so that their shops don’t carry more parts than needed.”



A robust system should provide the same functions offered by Kenworth PremierCare Connect, which is available through Kenworth dealers. It should allow users to establish an automated parts reorder process and help track costs through American Trucking Associations vehicle maintenance reporting standards (VMRS) codes, Wisdom said. The Kenworth PremierCare Connect system can track work histories on specific units, enabling mechanics to more accurately diagnose issues and avoid costly repeat or unnecessary repairs. The system also tracks warranty periods and recalls, so that companies can recover reimbursements from manufacturers or suppliers quickly.

Unlike the Kenworth PremierCare Connect system, most maintenance programs are offered as stand-alone software, which may require users to make expensive upgrades to their computers or existing networks, Wisdom said. Required upgrades may add a significant delay to the implementation process. While providers of such software are starting to offer hosted solutions, users should consider how much experience they have in offering those hosted solutions.

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Truck fleets, such Service Rock Products (above) in Victorville, Calif., and Zimmerman Truck Lines (below) in Mifflintown, Pa.; use Kenworth PremierCare Connect to help enhance productivity.



Experienced providers often offer training options and extensive online user manuals that allow employees to train at their own pace, he added. For example, Kenworth PremierCare Connect offers an online library of more than 60 training videos for users. With the video library, employees can be trained to step in for co-workers who leave or go on vacation. Wisdom said companies should also find out how much application and technical support they will receive after system installation and activation. Kenworth offers both application and technical support services as part of the program's monthly fee. With PremierCare Connect, that support is enhanced by Kenworth's extensive dealer network.

Fleet maintenance software should be scalable, allowing users to add functions that make sense for their maintenance shops, Wisdom said. Kenworth PremierCare Connect has a module that lets mechanics or technicians scan in work orders so that managers can review their time on and off the job to the nearest minute.

PremierCare Connect has a mileage upload module to retrieve vehicle mileage readings from fleet management systems from providers, such as Qualcomm or PeopleNet. Connect provides optional tethered or portable bar code scanners and a bar code label printer for shops to track parts inventory by scanning data into the computer instead of manually inputting the information.

Based on the successful experiences of Kenworth PremierCare Connect users, Wisdom offers these top 10 ways a fleet maintenance program with add-on features can help fleet managers and shop supervisors manage costs in their shops and boost profitability for their companies:

**Maximize equipment uptime.** Fleet maintenance software should allow users to create maintenance schedules so that shop supervisors and fleet managers can coordinate repairs and routine maintenance. This helps work to be completed on time and minimizes vehicle time spent in the shop.

**Manages parts inventory accurately.** This function reduces on-hand inventory and inventory shrinkage by helping shops maintain an accurate physical inventory. Once shops complete an accurate physical parts count, users can maintain that accuracy by tracking when parts arrive and when they are taken out of inventory and issued to specific work orders. By adding optional tethered or portable bar code scanners and bar code label printer, shops can further automate this process, noted Wisdom.

**Manages and tracks the cost of parts.** Managers can control parts costs with a fleet maintenance management software to eliminate duplicate orders, track special parts orders, or compare a part's current cost to its cost when last ordered. With a robust system like Kenworth PremierCare Connect, managers can see who created the purchase order and which supplier was used so that they can identify and correct any potential issues before their companies are billed. If the maintenance management system is connected to a parts supplier, like PremierCare Connect, the parts supplier may offer special rebates for purchases made through that system.

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**Provides an automated parts reorder process.** Systems like Kenworth PremierCare Connect offer minimum/maximum settings that allow users to maintain a steady supply of parts critical to the company's everyday operations. It also helps users control parts inventory costs. The automated system can be set to always keep any number of critical parts in shop inventory. When a part is issued to a work order, the system places an order with the shop's dealer to replenish the stock to the pre-determined level. The system can be set to require approval for parts orders when the number of parts in inventory reaches a certain level. The system can also suggest a reorder quantity based on past ordering patterns.

**Analyzes and tracks costs by VMRS codes.** The system should come preloaded with the American Trucking Associations VMRS codes. This allows managers to quickly compare and analyze the cost of parts by component or repair type, such as brakes, engine or air conditioning, said Wisdom.

**Provides equipment cost tracking reports.** Look for a fleet maintenance management program that offers reports and interactive screens providing managers fast and easy analysis. Reports and interactive screens in the Kenworth PremierCare Connect system help managers investigate cost details of internal repair work orders and analyze 12-month equipment costs. Managers can view work order histories, as well as labor and parts histories.

**Manages fuel costs more effectively.** Managers can take control of one of their top vehicle expenses by comparing fuel costs from different suppliers for the same vehicle, noted Wisdom. Kenworth PremierCare Connect offers an optional feature that enables managers to capture fuel costs by fuel type. The feature can produce reports showing cost-per-mile based on vehicle mileage readings, and list fuel purchases by state or province to assist in fuel tax reporting.

**Provides frequent updates to mileage readings.** This add-on feature allows users to upload vehicle mileage readings from a fleet or fuel management system provider, said Wisdom. The feature improves the accuracy of mileage-dependent reports, such as "maintenance due" and "cost per reading", because it eliminates the need to manually enter mileage data and provides more timely updates. These updates give a shop greater flexibility in scheduling maintenance for the company's vehicles. It also helps fleets avoid costly downtime since preventive maintenance services and mandatory inspections are kept current.

**Captures mechanics time on assigned jobs quickly and accurately.** By adding this feature to a fleet maintenance management program, service technicians can scan in work orders and managers can compare actual job times with estimated completion times. Since the work orders are scanned instead of manually entered into the system, managers can more accurately monitor productivity and address issues that slow shop operations. This feature allows managers to monitor shop work at a macro level, while looking for exceptions. The system then allows them to dig down further and examine those exceptions on a micro level — job-by-job or time entry-by-time entry.

**Provides interoperability with accounting software.** This add-on feature increases user productivity by eliminating double entry from the work order into a third-party accounting package, such as Intuit QuickBooks® or Sage Software's Peachtree®. According to a recent study conducted by the Department of Computer Science at the University of Sheffield, England, the average error rate for keyboard entry was between 12 and 24 percent, depending on the typing skill of the person entering the data. This feature can significantly reduce manual input errors.

Many providers of fleet maintenance programs offer interactive demos on their Web sites to help managers with the process of selection and comparison.

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Programs like Kenworth PremierCare Connect, ([www.kenworthconnect.com](http://www.kenworthconnect.com)) go a step further, Wisdom said. They offer no-obligation, free consultation and access to a more extensive demonstration that allow managers to try out the system to be sure it works properly for them.

Generally, program providers offer several options ranging from a basic system designed for fleets of 20 or more vehicles, or repair shops with three or more service technicians, to an enterprise system designed for large companies. Besides most of the functions and add-on features mentioned, enterprise systems may include the ability to support multiple business units, real-time shop activity monitoring, and the ability for mechanics to scan in work orders.

Once they have narrowed their options, fleet managers or shop supervisors should then contact the providers for additional consultation on pricing. “The cost of a fleet maintenance management program really depends on a variety of things, including what functions your company operation needs, number of mechanics and technicians in your maintenance shop, and number of trucks in your fleet,” Wisdom said. “Selecting the right fleet maintenance management program with the right features for your company’s operation, is key to realizing the system’s full potential.”

Kenworth believes that Kenworth PremierCare customer support programs contributed to Kenworth receiving the 2009 J.D. Power and Associates award for “Highest in Customer Satisfaction for Heavy Duty Dealer Service.”\*

Kenworth Truck Company is the manufacturer of The World’s Best® heavy and medium duty trucks. Kenworth is an industry leader in providing fuel-saving technology solutions that help increase fuel efficiency and reduce emissions. The company’s dedication to the green fleet includes aerodynamic trucks, medium duty diesel-electric hybrids, and liquefied natural gas trucks. This year, Kenworth became the first truck manufacturer to receive the Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Air Excellence award in recognition of its environmentally friendly products. In addition, Kenworth is the recipient of the 2009 J.D. Power and Associates awards for Highest in Customer Satisfaction for Over the Road Segment and Pickup and Delivery Segment Class 8 Trucks. Kenworth’s Internet home page is at [www.kenworth.com](http://www.kenworth.com). Kenworth. A PACCAR Company.

\*Kenworth received the highest numerical score among pickup & delivery and over-the-road Class 8 trucks and heavy-duty manufacturers in the proprietary J.D. Power and Associates 2009 Heavy-Duty Customer Satisfaction Study(SM). Study based on 2,492 total U.S. responses measuring 4 (over-the-road), 5 (pickup & delivery), 8 (dealer service) manufacturers and measures opinions of principal maintainers. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of those surveyed in February – March 2009. Your experiences may vary. [jdpower.com](http://jdpower.com).