

A Lot Less than my Kid's College Tuition - *By Dan Swain*

With the start of another school year just around the corner, there are always the “best of” reviews that pop up touting the most prestigious institutions of higher learning. In some cases you can even find listings for other things like the best “party” schools, the best places for Greek life / dorm life, the best athletic facilities, and on and on. When looking at some of these schools, it is amazing to see annual tuitions of \$40K and even \$50K+! Yikes. Even more amazing to me is the fact that a soft economy drives yet more people back to consider additional education or even a new path of learning. The point here is simple: We drive our children, our spouses, our friends and even ourselves to continue improving our education, knowing that the statistics of more education typically equates into higher salaries over a working lifetime. And, we do so knowing that the price tag isn't cheap. Why, you might ask, is this relevant for an ATM blog? A great question indeed. Taking that same philosophy over to ATM field service, we can draw many of the same parallels. Ongoing support of ATMs deployed in the field requires a certain skill level combining education, experience, and support.



For some companies that focus on field service as one of their primary offerings, having properly trained technicians is absolutely paramount in providing for continued financial success from a fleet of machines. Making the INVESTMENT to ensure technicians have proper skills to work with electronics, mechanical devices, and electricity is wise indeed. Understanding proper diagnosis and trouble-shooting techniques all equate into increased up-time and a lower cost of service.

Having observed a number of students who attended field service training classes at Guru University, it was amazing how many were not familiar with the use of a multi-meter. This is one of the basic tenants of providing proper troubleshooting capabilities. Yet, many of the technicians who attend are unfamiliar with how a multi-meter really works. What about proper service documentation? Here again, a number of technical support calls involve technicians who have no documentation, because they never attended a training class to receive proper service manuals. Granted, we aren't working on rocket ships here, and as one of my high school teachers (my football coach who doubled as a Driver's Ed teacher) liked to say, “Aint nobody going to die over it.”

However, time is indeed money, and spending a little bit of both will provide a huge payback when supporting units in the field. Sending a tech out that is less than prepared costs lots in terms of wasted time troubleshooting, and return visits. Really, a service education is an on-going process that never ends. With software releases, firmware updates, and new models being introduced by multiple manufacturers, it can be a big job just keeping up on technological advances. So when your business is a little off, or when the economic climate has got you down, it might seem like the last thing you want to do is spend on training. But it is times like that when investing in your business can lay the groundwork for future payoffs. The good news is: most field service classes last a week or less and are available for less than a grand. Think about that the next time junior wants to get an advanced art history degree at an Ivy League school. Clearly, the lesson here is, in the immortal words of Yogi Berra “If you come to a fork in the road, take it.”