

So...You want to be a diesel tech

So...You have decided that you want to be a diesel tech. That's a great choice for a career. It has a great big, wide open market of possible places of employment. It also has a very good earning potential. It's a field that isn't going away anytime soon. It has opportunities for advancement. It is very rewarding. All in all, a worthy goal. In a way, being a diesel tech is like garbage men and undertakers. Sooner or later, EVERYONE needs one, and as diesel techs, we keep this old world operating. Without diesel in your life in one way or another, everyone would be walking, naked and hungry.

Before you jump into this career path, you owe yourself a conversation and discussion on the topic of "Is this the right choice for me?". We sincerely hope it is and that you let us help you in attaining your goals.

When you consider this career, some of the questions you need to ask yourself are:

1. Why am I choosing this?
2. What do I expect to gain from it?
3. How serious am I about this?
4. Am I willing to put in the required effort?
5. Is this my choice because I think it might be an easy path?
6. Am I really ready for this?
7. Do I have the basic learning and study skills necessary?
8. What is this career really like?

Why people choose this career or education path are varied. Most want to have an opportunity to work with their hands and enjoy that aspect of it. Some genuinely love the idea of working on the big equipment, trucks and tractors. Some want a very financially rewarding career. Unfortunately, some choose it as an experiment to see if this is what they want to do. For the most part, those who undertake this as an experiment usually don't succeed. Some of the reasons they don't succeed is due to a lack of commitment, a lack of genuine desire or discovering that it really isn't for them.

You can expect (if successful) a challenging, rewarding career that can take you a lot of places both financially and geographically. You will have the opportunity to work with and on equipment that is valued at or over \$100,000 up to millions. There is a lot of responsibility and expectations that go with it. If you are expecting us as instructors to stand beside you and tell you what to do step by step on how to do a particular job, you are bound for disappointment. We don't do that. We will guide you, direct you, explain how and why things are the way they are and we will try our best to help you understand those things but we will not do it for you. Also, you do not have as many chances to do it as you want. We have a limited amount of time in which to get the information, knowledge and skills into you. One of our biggest goals here is to make you a self-sufficient learner. In this business it is ABSOLUTELY REQUIRED to become one. Technology advances and changes too fast and at some point in your career, you will just have to figure out on your own how something is supposed to work...on the job.

This education path is not like taking a history, English or math class. There is a sizeable investment to be made on your part. Not just the usual tuition, books and fees, but tools, time, money and commitment. We require each student to obtain their own hand tools according to our published list. This set of tools

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can easily reach \$800 to \$1,000 or more. As a professional technician, you will wind up buying 1,000's more in tools. Our classes are not like that math or history class that meets for a short time once or twice per week. Our classes will have you here most of the day, every day. You will be required to stay up and current with the topics in the classroom, tests (written and hands-on), assignments, and study time on your part. This program will take two full academic years to complete, plus some evening or on-line classes if you want to obtain a degree along the way. You will be expected to be here on time every day. You will be expected to be prepared and ready to learn. You will be expected to contribute to the learning process by participating in class discussion, working in small groups and being engaged in the learning process. This is college. It isn't high school. As far as grades go, we have a scale that includes A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79) and F (0-69). There are no D's in this. This grade scale is based on industry and what they consider passing on manufacturer specialized training.

At this point, let's discuss a little red wagon. You know the one I'm talking about. Many of us had one as a child that was pulled around hauling who knows what. Here, you come with an empty one. We put things into it throughout the semester such as Ohm's Law, how to use a volt meter, how to use a micrometer or other precision measuring device, engine theory, gear theory, fuel systems, etc. As you progress, the wagon gets a bit fuller. At the end of the semester, you DO NOT get to empty the wagon in preparation for the next semester. You have to come in with a second empty wagon behind the first (now full) one. This process continues for two more semesters. What we learn from one semester to the next is a progression. First is concepts, principles and facts. Then come the application of those facts to various situations. When you finish here, you move into that first job. On that first job, your wagons have now become a large dump truck, only partially full. As you progress in the career, you learn more that goes in there. This process continues.

Everyone has had that time in our lives (if we are honest about it) that we just quite couldn't or wouldn't finish what we start. It may have been something as small as a set of book cases that we never got around to or finished. This two year investment will take commitment on your part. It is not an easy path, but it IS something that can be accomplished if you are really intent on being a success. We have probably all heard the saying "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink". That is very appropriate here. We provide the water, but if you aren't willing to drink of what we put forth, you are going to be wasting your time, your money and end up very disappointed.

Over the years, we have held an often repeated conversation with high school counselors that goes something like this: Well, I have a student who isn't exactly college material, but I think they could be a decent mechanic. Our question then is this: Let's suppose for a moment that this student is in the 'C' to 'D' range. If this student were to somehow make it through our program (C level), would you feel good about them working on your brake system or steering system? That may be a harsh type of answer, but its purpose is to put it all into perspective. This business requires quality and attention to detail. As mentioned before, many of these machines are very costly. A customer or service facility isn't likely to trust someone who is lacking in quality or attention to detail the responsibility of repairing that expensive machinery. This isn't meant to stop you from the career, but to let you know what awaits and what is required to get you ready for that career. A good future tech must have good reading, solid in basic arithmetic, communication and interpersonal skills. Above all, you have got to be a thinker.

A good entry level technician must be able to work with others and communicate to the customer, management and others what you found, how you fixed it and what caused the problem. A customer's equipment that is being repaired under a warrantee situation has a need for good communication skills

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on your part. A technician in that situation MUST be able to accurately describe what the exact problem was determined to be, exactly how it was located and repaired. Failure to do so could result in the shop and the technician missing out on pay for the job. Some of that we can help you develop along the way, but if you really struggle with reading and comprehension, this is going to be a real battle for you. Get yourself ready, then... come see us. You must be able to follow specific, detailed instructions. Many service manuals have pictures, but it isn't the picture that's the instruction. It's the words written about the picture that convey the information. Most manuals and other service literature are written on a 12th to 13th grade level. Sorry, they don't make the comic book version of how to repair a Cummins engine...or any other item for that matter, nor do they come on audio tapes nor is anyone going to read it to you.

While attending here, we try to get you accustomed to what the employer expects: Punctuality, dedication, willingness to do what is expected, and doing it correctly. Don't expect an employer to give you a raise after 3 weeks because you showed up for work. They don't do 'show-up' awards or participation trophies. We expect you here, on time for every class session. This isn't free and you have made an investment or someone has graciously paid it for you (think 'parent', 'friends', 'relatives' and 'tax payers').

The physical work of doing the jobs we have in store for you are not hard, but they do require attention to detail. What can be hard though is learning the theory of why and how. We need students who have good reading and basic arithmetic skills. A good student will also be able to devote their time and energy to learning. You may think that two years is a long time, and on the calendar it may seem so. In reality, the two years will go by very quickly. We have 16 weeks per semester. That is a short time to try and instill an understanding of basic electrical systems, hydraulics, air conditioning / heating / ventilation systems and a large collection of other items that you will need to know just to make your second, third and final semesters possible or potentially successful. And note...that is the first semester. After that they just get deeper and more involved in other topics such as electronic controls, fuel injection, trouble-shooting, diagnostics, transmissions, engines...and MORE electronics, controls and hydraulics.

The machines we work on now are more complicated and dependent on computer controls than ever before and are only getting more so. Now don't think that you have to be a Microsoft computer programmer. That isn't what we mean. You do have to be able to work competently with a computer though. As stated, the work isn't that hard, but the concepts can be. We will help you on that...IF you are willing and put out the effort on your part.

If you really want to know what this career actually involves, it is strongly suggested that you pay a visit to several repair facilities and do a little looking, questioning and observing. It will be time well invested.

Let's get this one out and in the open now; you WILL get dirty, greasy, and nasty and more than likely pick up a few nicks and scratches. It's all part of the game. Employers will have you doing some repairs that you just don't like. If your favorite thought is that you want to rebuild 'motors' (they are actually engines), the reality in that is that it's not what you think. Many are just exchanged. The engine (you say motor, we say engine) is only a producer of power. After that there are electrical, hydraulic, accessories, transmissions, axles, brakes, steering, leaks, low power, excess smoke, rattles, squeaks, kerthunks, kerchunks, no shifts, poor shifts, and much more. Some of them will be difficult to locate, troublesome to access and a downright pain to repair. Some repairs may be done in the middle of a cotton field, in the bottom of a dirt pit or on the side of the highway lined on the shoulders by grass burrs...at night.

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But guess what? You are expected to do it and do it right. An employer, when after seeing that you have been a diligent student and a good example of an entry level tech, might make a choice to provide you with product or manufacturer specific training. If you get this opportunity, you will be expected to attend a fast and intense short (between 2 days to a week) training session. This may cover the entire electronic control system utilized on a vehicle and it's all done in 2 or 3 days. It might be the latest changes in a system, the features and pitfalls of a new engine or the servicing of the entire machine. Remember...in 2-4 days. These are usually paid for by the employer, you are provided transportation to and from, lodging, meals, your regular pay and the opportunity. In return, the boss expects you to learn the information then be able to do what they just paid \$1,000 or more for. Come back, do it and prove to them you can and are a good employee and you may be going on to more of those little school sessions. Add some time and more experience and one day you may be the service manager, foreman, or manager. Who knows...maybe even owner.

Now...having read all of this, take some time. Think it over and be honest with yourself. Is being a diesel repair technician what you really want to do and are you certain this is what you would consider your 'life's calling'? If so, then congratulations! If not, then you may want to consider something else as your career. It has often been stated "Oh...you can be anything you want to be!". Well, the real truth is that no, that isn't true. That statement is not being mean, it's being honest. Not everyone is cut out for this. You have to have the desire, drive, motivation, dedication and basic learning skills it takes to get there.

We want to see you succeed and we will do all within our ability to help get you there, but we can't do it for you and we won't. The real success begins with you and your desire to succeed. Half-hearted efforts give poor returns. There are services available to help you with some of the basic skills, and they can read the test to you, give you extra time to complete it, provide extra privacy while you do it, etc., but in the real world, none of that exists. Employers won't read the service manual nor give you extra time to complete the task at hand or make it a private repair shop. They will expect you (with gained experience) to be able to competently make a repair without their supervision, assistance or explanation.

Our best wishes and hopes are extended for you and your future, whatever it may be. We want it to be the right choice for you. One that will bring you what you hope for.

If we are in your future, then please...come and visit us, talk to us. See what we do and how.

Sincerely,

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