

# Automotive Diagnostic Podcast: Tech-Turned-Owner Backs Hourly Pay for Auto Techs

*Ex-tech San Diego shop owner Dean Sharpe and hiring pro Chris Lawson share hourly-pay plan on Automotive Diagnostic Podcast amid a 471K tech shortage by 2028*

OCEANSIDE, CA, UNITED STATES, July 15, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the automotive repair industry grapples with a projected need for 471,000 new technicians by 2028, according to the

TechForce Foundation's Transportation Technician Supply & Demand Report, a groundbreaking episode of the Automotive Diagnostic Podcast reveals why successful shops are abandoning traditional flat-rate compensation in favor of hourly pay with performance bonuses. The episode features Dean Sharpe, owner of Sharpe Automotive in San Diego, and Chris Lawson, founder of [Technician Find](#), discussing proven

strategies for attracting and retaining top talent in today's competitive market.

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With approximately 276,000 repair shops in the United States, there's a shop out there for every technician that will have the right culture, values, vision, and career path.”

*Chris Lawson*

"I spent my whole career on flat rate, but I've completely changed my approach," says Dean Sharpe, who transformed from a GM dealership lot porter to successful shop owner with 12 employees. "I want technicians to use their experience and knowledge without killing themselves physically to make that paycheck. We pay them hourly with performance bonuses, whether we're busy or slow."

This compensation philosophy addresses a fundamental industry pain point. 40% of technicians agree that pay structure is the most important thing that needs to be fixed to combat the technician shortage, according to WrenchWay's 2025 industry statistics.

The timing couldn't be more critical. TechForce Foundation data reveals that demand for new technicians is estimated to outpace supply by five to one, while the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects over 67,000 job openings annually for automotive technicians between 2022 and 2032.



Automotive Diagnostic Podcast

**309: Dean Sharpe & Chris Lawson on Finding—and Becoming—a Great Shop**

July 14, 2025 • Sean Tipping • Episode 309

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The episode explores how Sharp Automotive's innovative approach to compensation has helped the shop grow from a one-person operation to 12 employees in just nine years. Sharpe, who brings 28 years of industry experience including time as a GM dealership technician, shares his philosophy on creating a workplace where technicians thrive.

This compensation philosophy addresses a fundamental industry pain point. According to WrenchWay's 2025 Voice of Technician Report, 40% of technicians agree that pay structure is the most important thing that needs to be fixed to combat the technician shortage.

#### Key Revelations from Episode 309:

- The Death of Flat Rate: The discussion explores how hourly pay with performance bonuses creates stability while rewarding productivity
- The Career Path Crisis: Limited advancement opportunities plague the industry, with innovative solutions including mentorship roles for senior technicians
- Culture Over Everything: Open-door policies, clean facilities, and transparent communication trump traditional hierarchical management
- Strategic Hiring: Successful shops invest in training, attend conferences, and develop clear five-year growth plans

Chris Lawson, whose company Technician Find has helped over 200 independent repair shops [hire automotive technicians](#) since 2018, shares insights on the current hiring landscape and what drives technician satisfaction in the workplace.

The episode also addresses critical red flags technicians should watch for:

- Owners distracted during interviews or lack of professionalism
- No training opportunities or investment in employee development
- Lack of transparency about compensation and growth plans
- High turnover without reasonable explanations

"With approximately 276,000 repair shops in the United States, according to the Auto Care Association, there's a shop out there for every technician that will have the right culture, values, vision, and career path," notes Lawson.

Sean Tipping, host of the Automotive Diagnostic Podcast and mobile diagnostic technician, brings unique perspective from visiting multiple shops daily. The podcast, which Tipping announced is approaching one million downloads, has become a vital resource for technicians and shop owners navigating industry challenges.

About the Automotive Diagnostic Podcast: The Automotive Diagnostic Podcast explores the diagnostic and technology side of automotive repair, featuring weekly episodes with industry

experts. The show airs Sundays at 10 AM across all major podcast platforms. Episode 309 is available now at <https://autodiagpodcast.com/>.

About Technician Find: Technician Find specializes in connecting independent auto repair shops with qualified technicians and [mechanics for hire](#) nationwide. Founded by Chris Lawson, the company offers recruitment services, consulting, and AI-powered hiring solutions. Learn more at <https://www.technicianfind.com/>.

About Sharp Automotive: Sharp Automotive is a full-service auto repair shop in San Diego, California, known for its innovative approach to technician compensation and workplace culture. Owner Dean Sharpe brings 28 years of industry experience to his successful 12-person operation. Learn more at <https://www.sharpe-automotive.com/>

Chris Lawson

Technician Find

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