KEYTRAK®

FIVE KEY CONTROL TIPS

Improve Your Dealership's Security and Efficiency

Introduction

Consider what the following issues have in common:

- Lost keys or dealer plates
- Delayed test drives
- Missed sales and service appointments
- Stolen vehicles

The most obvious common denominator is wasted time and lost profits. If you look further, however, these issues have something else in common: poor key and asset management.

To protect your assets and reach peak efficiency, your dealership must have effective processes for managing its keys. To get started, follow the six tips below.

1. Hold Employees Accountable

With traditional key control methods such as pegboards, there is limited employee accountability. If an employee takes a key without signing it out, there is no immediate way to know which employee has the key. To prevent employees wasting time searching for keys, consider a system that automatically keeps track of the employees who take keys.

With an electronic key control system, when an employee removes a certain key, the system creates an audit trail including the details of the key request, such as who checked out the key and when. Coupled with the time limits on certain keys, this information can be useful in the event that keys aren't returned on time, which could interfere with test drives.

2. Require Non-replicable Access Information

To prevent the unnecessary expense of replacing keys, choose a key control system that requires authorization before employees can access keys. Passwords and proximity cards are helpful in controlling access to a system, but non-shareable methods of authentication (such as fingerprints) are ideal for ensuring that only authorized users can remove keys.

When using passwords, for example, users have to meet complexity requirements and regularly change their passwords. With access cards, managers have to enforce security guidelines like preventing card sharing and retrieving cards from terminated employees.

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But fingerprints are like snowflakes; there are no two alike. Because they vary from person to person (even identical twins), companies and agencies worldwide use biometric fingerprint technology to thwart wrongdoers and improve security. Plus, research proves that fingerprint accuracy remains persistent over time,[1] which cuts down on the administrative burden of frequently updating access control methods.

3. Terminate Former Employees' Access to Keys

When an employee is fired or quits, it's important to terminate all their access to dealership systems and assets. If you don't have a verifiable method of tracking key usage, however, it can be difficult to know if they've returned all the keys in their possession. Not to mention, they don't instantly forget confidential knowledge (like where keys are stored).

In fact, in the summer of 2016, a 38-year-old California man strolled into a San Bernardinoarea dealership, pocketed a pair of keys and drove off in another person's vehicle — all during business hours.[2] It turned out the man had previously been employed at the dealership, so he knew exactly where keys were kept.

Protect the integrity of your company and its assets by purchasing a key control system that restricts access to active user accounts only. Using a key control system that recognizes the username or fingerprint of a former employee whose account has been disabled prevents them from gaining access to keys that only current employees should have.

4. Set Restrictions on Keys

Conventional methods of signing out keys, such as logbooks and computer sign-out sheets, are unreliable. Employees can easily make mistakes, whether it's writing down the wrong vehicle information or forgetting to record their name. Other times, employees forgo signing out keys because they think they'll return them shortly. This seems harmless until employees forget to put them back altogether and the keys are lost.

Electronic key control systems offer a solution by automatically recording the details of key transactions (who checked out a specific key and when) and enforcing time limits and authorized users. The system administrator can designate which users have access to certain keys in addition to setting time limits on certain keys. When sales reps remove vehicle keys for test drives, you can require that they return the key within an hour or so. If a key isn't returned on time, you can have the system send you an email or text alert.

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5. Implement a Process for Reserving Keys

As you know, vehicle sales rely on both walk-ins and scheduled appointments. But how often do your reps set appointments, only to find that the keys to the vehicle they're scheduled to show are missing? Moreover, if you have a vehicle scheduled for maintenance and the service rep can't find the keys (or the car), it could throw off your entire service schedule.

Solve both of these problems by implementing an electronic key control system that allows users to reserve keys for specific times. If a user who didn't reserve the key attempts to check it out during the reserved time frame, the system will display a pop-up notifying the user that the key has already been reserved. Alternatively, you have the option for a reserved key to be unavailable to any user but the one who reserved it. This ensures that your service schedule will stay on target and reduces the risk that a vehicle will be unavailable for a scheduled test drive.

Key Contol Best Practices to Remember

- Choose a key control system that authorizes users via non-replicable information.
- Hold employees accountable by requiring employees to return keys within a designated time frame.
- Automatically record key checkout and return details to prevent keys from falling through the cracks.
- Consider a system that allows user accounts to be disabled to prevent former employees from accessing keys.
- Set a process for reserving keys.

Conclusion

Whether you're looking to improve your bottom line, tighten security or better track inventory, an electronic key control system can enhance your dealership's security and efficiency. Contact us to learn how else KeyTrak can benefit your dealership.

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[1] "Research Shows Fingerprint Accuracy Stays the Same over Time," Security Magazine, 2015 ▪ http://www.securitymagazine.com/articles/86492-research-shows-fingerprint-accuracy-stays-the-same-over-time

[2] "LOMA LINDA: Former Honda employee accused of stealing car," The Press-Enterprise, 2016 ▪ https://www.pe.com/2016/05/29/loma-linda-former-honda-employee-accused-of-stealing-car/