

eSCOPE[®] Electronic Lab Scope

Training

ESCOPE Article - Air Strike

by Jacques Gordon September 1, 2007 Motor Age

In 1991, Anello's extensive GM diagnostics training put him at the leading edge at a time when those skills and tools were still new to the industry. Recognizing a business opportunity, he packed a van with 'scopes and scan tools and took the plunge, and he's never looked back. His business has grown every year, and every one of his customers has been referred by other shops. Today his clients include repair shops, transmission shops and body shops, and he works on all makes, all models.

If Anello is at the leading edge of the diagnostic business, then Bernie Thompson of Automotive Test Solutions is at the pointy tip of the spear. Thompson designed and built much of the diagnostic suite into Anello's Hummer H2, and it is spectacular. A drop-down panel in the tailgate holds 14-foot leads for the oscilloscope, a set of grounding leads, and leads for a sensor-signal generator. The equipment bay holds a custom-built gaming computer that runs the 15-inch flat-screen display panel, a wireless communication hub, and a five-gas exhaust analyzer. The computer also runs EASE diagnostic software, QuickBooks business software, and five different service information systems. A second custom-built computer is dedicated to wireless communications for the printer and scan tools.

The centerpiece of the built-in suite is Thompson's eSCOPE, a dual time-base eight-channel oscilloscope. All eight channels can be stacked, superimposed or viewed separately, scaled separately, and displayed along with other data. The 'scope's hold function will display the last five sweeps, and 250,000 sweeps can be held on the computer in an overwriting loop. The display has cursors, zoom functions, and digital and bar graph readouts. It's the most powerful oscilloscope I've seen, and Anello said learning to use it was no small task.

Anello's truck also carries every OEM scan tool available (contrary to EPA regulations, not all of them are), plus a variety of powerful aftermarket scanners. There's also a smoke machine, charging system testers, pressure testers and a laptop dedicated to PCM reprogramming.

Anello told us that most shops resist calling him the first time, but when he quickly solves a tough problem that has already cost them several un-billable hours, return business is guaranteed. He said they recognize that, just like buying expensive tools that are only used a few times a month, it doesn't make sense to make an ongoing investment in equipment and education unless it can be amortized over a big percentage of your customer base. Anello's investment is amortized over every job, and he believes his business model is the future of diagnostics for most of the automotive service industry.

There are cars on the road today that have almost every switch, light bulb, valve and actuator connected to a computer. These cars aren't so much started as booted-up, and diagnosing a malfunction quickly requires advanced equipment and expertise. Spend a little time in the Technology section of some OEM and Tier 1 Web sites, and you'll see that more new models will be like this every year. John Anello might be right.