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WHAT IS FLAT RATE REPAIR PRICING?

Flat rate repair pricing is the term retail residential trade contractors use to describe providing a fixed upfront price to the customer for a specific repair. To the customer, it is an "Up-Front Price," which means the price you quote upfront before you do the work is the price the customer pays. The customer will always know the total investment for the job before any work is done. Naturally, the customer loves this type of pricing because the customer can budget the work to a fixed dollar with no surprises.

Many residential contractors still charge by the hour, which, on the surface, may seem less expensive. Unfortunately, most customers view paid-by-the-hour work as a rip-off.

The problem with paid-by-the-hour work is that the customer never really knows until the job is done what their final price will be. This makes them anxious during the service call because of the fear of possibly getting that big surprise at the end of the job. Why? The customer also knows that some contractors are fast, and some are slow. The customer tends to feel it is unfair to be penalized for a slow technician. Studies show that it is only human nature to feel all technicians are slow if it is hourly billing. Unfortunately, this causes unnecessary stress on the service technician.

WHY FLAT RATE PRICING IF BETTER THAN TIME & MATERIAL PRICING?

- 1. A flat rate enables a service business to charge a labor rate that recovers service department overheads and is profitable without alienating customers.
- 2. Flat-rate pricing makes your company and your technicians appear more professional.
- 3. It demonstrates you have experience with the type of problem your customer has because it is described and priced in a flat rate guide.
- 4. When you quote out of the flat rate guide, the math is already done, the proper spelling is right in front of you, and the customer is assured they are paying the same price.
- 5. Improves Customer Satisfaction:
- 6. Happier customers due to higher service call professionalism.
- 7. Improves collections due to upfront pricing approval.
- 8. Helps eliminate "the price is too high" complaint.
- 9. Our Fix-Right price guide helps systematically sell service agreements by communicating to customers the value of service agreements to prevent future repairs.
- 10. Promotes the value of service agreements by offering a discount option off repair price.

How TO PRICE YOUR SERVICES TO MAKE A FAIR PROFIT

Isn't it time to stop underpricing your repairs, system fixes, enhancements, and replacement services? Underpricing is hurtful not only to you but also to your company and its people. This chapter will teach you how to price your services to make a fair profit.

Many contractors will always charge more for their services than you, and there will always be contractors who charge less than you. We will always support raising your prices but never help you underprice your work.

The HVACPro Residential Online Growth Club option includes all flat rate price guides and call handling documents showcased in the User Guide. To obtain the document, go to www.JoinHVACSuccess.com, click "HVACPro Business Center" in the top menu, and click the "HVACPro Residential Online Growth Club" link. Members can immediately download the document. Non HVACPro Club Members can order individual documents; call us at 800-240-2823.

WHY UPFRONT PRICING IS NEEDED

Underpricing is the top reason we lose 85% of all residential contractors who start a business within the first five years and another 10% every year after that.

A flat rate or upfront repair price item is financially the same as a quoted job's total cost of goods sold, including:

- The skilled labor for travel to the job site, diagnosis of problem/issue, quote price, and repair.
- The service vehicle per hour cost for mortgage/lease, depreciation, maintenance, and cleaning.
- The selected parts and materials to complete the repair.
- The parts or system equipment labor and material warranty coverage.
- The company's overhead recovery.
- The desired gross profit before discount or rebate.

EXAMPLE: Upfront Flat Rate Repair Price Guide Format

Service tickets should be **logically itemized and self-explanatory** to the customer. They should be consumer-logical and in a self-explanatory order designed to help the technician avoid explaining each repair line item or getting into techy talk with customers.

The repair ticket should be accurate, itemized, and presented in a logical and easily understood sequence. It should not need an explanation—it should be self-explanatory. You would contribute your flat rate pricing to the customer for either work performed during regular hours or work performed after hours and include a minimum of these four self-explanatory pricing items.

- 1. Diagnostic/Service Charge Fee
- **2.** Repair Description & Fee(s).
- **3.** Recommissioning & Safety Test Fee (repairs only).
- 4. Service Agreement Option Fee Discount Amount

Step #1 - Determining Your Flat Rate Hourly Vehicle Cost Rate

Most contractors use a flat per-trip charge for repair work. Some use this method while using zones for different distances from the home office (e.g., 15 miles from office (Zone A) = ½ hour round trip plus truck charge = \$38 cost charge). Your rate could be much higher or lower based on your company's unique labor billable efficiency situation due to the distance to your average call, vehicle purchase, installation of racks, and wrapping the vehicle cost rates. One way to be competitive is to purchase a low-mileage, three-model-year-old vehicle to pay only 60 cents on the dollar for a work delivery tool that will be beaten to a physical pulp within 36 to 48 months. Sidebar: The same applies when buying your boat, motor home, jet ski, or ATV.

To calculate the hourly truck and the per-mile fuel and maintenance costs, you can use the calculation as illustration below:

LINE #	DESCRIPTION	RATE
1	Technician/Installer Paid Hours	2088
2	Paid Number DAYS holidays	8
3	Paid holiday hours (Line 2 X 8 hours/day)	64
4	Paid Number of days of vacation	10
5	Paid vacation hours (Line 4 X 8 hours/day)	80
6	Paid number of DAYS sick	5
7	Paid number of sick hours (Line 6 X 8 hours/day)	40
8	Net available hours (Lines 1 – (3+5+7)	1904
9	Billable Efficiency	45%
10	Billable hours (Line 9 X Line 8)	857
	Truck Expenses	Expense Items
11	Truck Purchase Price	\$34,000

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29	Break Even Truck Expense Per Hour (Line 27 ÷ Line 28)	\$28
28	Billable Hours (Line 10 above)	857
27	Total Truck Expense Annually (Lines 12+13+14+15+19+22+23+26)	\$23,616
26	Cleaning & Detailing Annually (line 24 X Line 25)	\$458
25	Number of Cleaning Years	2
24	Cost Per Cleaning & Detailing	\$229
23	Repair & Maintenance	\$1,500
22	Total Cost Oil Changes Annually (line 20 X Line 21)	\$340
21	Number of Changes	5
20	Cost Per Oli Change	\$68
19	Total Fuel Annual Expense (line 16 ÷ Line 8) X Line 18	\$12,644
18	Gas Cost per Gallon	\$2.89
17	Miles Per Gallon	8
16	Truck Mileage Annually	35,000
15	State Inspection Fee	\$89
14	State Registration Fee	\$225
13	Insurance Annual Payment	\$1,900
12	STD Van 5-Year Annual Loan/Lease Payment	\$6,800

The result from this calculator means that for every hour the technician or installer is onsite to a job with a service vehicle, they must charge \$28/per hour.

Step #2 - Determining Your Flat Rate Hourly Technician Cost Rates

You want to hire the best available journeyman-level technicians to maximize service ticket opportunities. A journeyman is a technician skilled in all aspects of the residential tradecraft. This person would be considered competent to work in residential as a fully qualified technician for repairs, system fixes, enhancements, and replacement work.

Your pricing system must enable you to hire the best. Using a labor cost rate lower than that of a new hire journeyman would require adjusting your price guide to recover the higher technician cost. You will lose money on every call if you do not change for the higher technician labor cost.

This calculator below derives your unique company and local area technician hourly pricing rate for your upfront flat-rate pricing guide.

LINE #	DESCRIPTION	RATE
1	Journeyman-level technician pay per hour	\$30
2	Insurance expense benefits	24%
3	Total direct labor expense per hour (Line 1 x Line 2)	\$37.20
4	Total hours available	2080
5	Paid 10 DAYS vacation hours	80
6	Paid 8 DAYS holiday hours	56
7	Paid 5 DAYS sick hours (Line 6 x 8 hours/day)	48
8	Net available hours (Lines 4 – (Lines 5+6+7))	1976
9	Average annual billable efficiency	45%
10	Billable hours (Line 8 x Line 9)	889
11	Breakeven labor billable hour ((Line 4 ÷ Line 10) x Line 3)	\$87
12	Truck Expense Per Billable Hour (See above calc)	\$28
13	Breakeven labor & vehicle cost per billable hour (Line 11 + Line 12)	\$115
14	Target gross profit margin before service agreement discount	55%
15	Target hourly sell price (Line 13 / (1 – Line 14)	\$256
16	Billable person-day (Lines 15 X 8 hours/day	\$2,048

For example, a contractor requires \$256 per job site billable hour. The customers do not see this hourly rate since each itemized repair price ranges from a fraction of an hour to multiple hours to complete and add repair parts with markup.

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Step #3 - Determining Your Repair Warranty Reserve Cost Rates

A repair warranty reserve protects customers against unforeseen labor or material defects. Some repairs fail during the warranty period. We use markup on part(s) after local sales tax costs to cover repair callbacks.

Low-cost parts require a higher warranty reserve mark-up to protect you from a call-back deducted from your retained earnings.

The recommended warranty reserve mark-up Levels:

- Parts Mark-up \$0.00 \$9.99...... X 5.0
- Parts Mark-up \$10.00 \$49.99...... X 4.0
- Parts Mark-up \$50.00 \$99.99...... X 3.0
- Parts Mark-up \$100.00 \$199.99... X 2.0
- Parts Mark-up \$200.00 \$499.99... X 1.7
- Parts Mark-up \$499.99 and above. X 1.5

NOTE: Even warranty repairs require a warranty reserve mark-up to cover any post-repair call warranty labor and material reserve. When calculating the warranty reserve on warranty calls, you should mark the parts using the above warranty mark-up level. Then, remove the actual cost of the parts from the price.

Below is an example client HVAC repair ticket for replacing a run capacitor and fan motor pricing using the above best practice pricing method:

- Diagnostic/Service Charge = (.5-hour X \$249/hour = \$124.50) but due to local area market pressures, reduced to \$89
- Run Capacitor Replacement Price = (.5-hour X 249/hour) + (\$15.32 X 4) = \$185.78
- Universal Fan Motor Replacement Price = (1-hour X \$249/hour) + (\$110.12 X 2) = \$469.24
- Recommissioning & Safety Test = (.75-hour x \$249/hour) = \$186.75
- Total Upfront Repair Price to Customer = \$89+\$185.78+\$469.24+186.75 = \$930.77
- Service Agreement Discount Option 15% = (\$930.77 X .15) = -\$139.62

Below is an example client plumbing repair ticket for replacing a garbage disposal pricing using the above best practice pricing method:

- Diagnostic/Service Charge = (.5-hour X \$249/hour = \$124.50) but due to local area market pressures, reduced to \$89
- Garbage Disposal Price = (.75-hour X 249/hour) + (\$208.87 X 1.7) = \$541.82
- Total Upfront Repair Price to Customer = \$89+\$541.82 = \$630.82
- Service Agreement Discount Option 15% = (\$630.82 X .15) = -\$94.62

Below is an example client electrical repair ticket for replacing an AFCI Single Pole 20 AMP pricing using the above best practice pricing method:

- Diagnostic/Service Charge = (.5-hour X \$249/hour = \$124.50) but due to local area market pressures, reduced to \$89
- AFCI Single Pole 20 AMP Price = (.5-hour X 249/hour) + (\$ \$57.29 X 2) = \$303.33
- Total Upfront Repair Price to Customer = \$89+\$303.89 = \$392.89
- Service Agreement Discount Option 15% = (\$392.89 X .15) = -\$58.93

The 15% discount off the total repair ticket and a monthly service agreement option effectively close 85% of non-service agreement repair customers to a service agreement. Our client contractors find that the higher the repair ticket price, the higher the discount, resulting in a higher service agreement close rate.

Step #4 - Determine Your Monthly & Annual Service Agreement Cost Rates

There are two primary reasons for selling service agreements. The objective is not to make money with this product but to lock in your customer base and reduce non-chargeable time during slow sales. Below, we will calculate the annual and monthly prices for two inspections and one inspection service agreement for the first and two or more units at the exact location. Once we have the calculated rate, we adjust it to meet retail price presentation norms.

Example Residential Service Agreement Pricing Data

- Journeyman Labor Cost Rate = \$30/hour
- Average Travel Time = .5-hour
- Average Maintenance Tasking Hours = 1-hour
- Average Maintenance Cleaning Materials = \$8
- Average technician Customer Award = \$10
- Average Overhead % of sales = 35%
- Desired Net Profit Margin = 5%

Determining Their 1-Inspection Annually Sell Rate

- \$30/hour X .5 hours travel = \$15
- \$30/hour X 1-hour maintenance tasking) = \$30
- \$8 cleaning materials + \$10 technician reward = \$18
- Total cost = \$63
- Sale price \$63/ ((1-(35% overhead + 5% net profit margin)) = \$105
- Monthly = \$105/12 = \$8.75
- The annual 1st System rate changed the rate to \$99.
- The monthly 2nd system rate was changed to \$8.95.

Determining Their 1-Inspection Annually - Additional System Same Location Sell Rate

- Total cost = \$48 (less the travel of \$15)
- Sale price \$48/ ((1-(35% overhead + 5% net profit margin)) = \$80
- Monthly = \$80/12 = \$6.66
- The annual 1st System rate changed the rate to \$79.
- The monthly 2nd system rate was changed to \$6.95.

Determining Their 2-HVAC Inspection Annually Sell Rate

- \$30/hour X (2 trips X .5-hour travel) = \$30
- \$30/hour X (2 trips X 1-hour maintenance tasking) = \$60
- \$8 cleaning materials + \$10 technician reward = \$18
- Total cost = \$108
- Sale price \$108/ ((1-(35% overhead + 5% net profit margin)) = \$180
- Monthly = \$180/12 = \$15
- The annual 1st System rate changed the rate to \$179.
- Monthly 2nd System rate changed to \$14.95

Determining Their 2-HVAC Inspection Annually - Additional System Same Location

- Total cost = \$78 (less the travel of \$30)
- Sale price \$78/ ((1-(35% overhead + 5% net profit margin)) = \$130
- Monthly = \$130/12 = \$10.88
- The annual 1st System rate changed the rate to \$129.
- The monthly 2nd system rate was changed to \$10.95.

Proactive Repair Trust-Selling Standards Procedures & Forms

The HVACPro Residential Online Growth Club option includes all documents and programs showcased in the textbook. To obtain the document, go to www.JoinHVACSuccess.com, click "HVACPro Business Center" in the top menu, and click the "HVACPro Residential Online Growth Club" link. Members can immediately download the document. Non HVACPro Club Members can order individual documents; call us at 800-240-2823.

- 1. Preparing for the call involves making the right impression the first time. The pre-call technician prepares by taking pride in their appearance and having the right "do the right thing" attitude. They also arrive in a clean, fully stocked truck with tools, extra shirts, shoe covers, breath mints, company calls handling handouts, and forms identifying the service call purpose.
- **2.** Arriving at the call involves properly parking the service vehicle, checking appearance and breath mints, and correctly approaching the customer's home.

- **3.** Greeting the customer—This includes properly knocking on the door, shaking hands, verifying the purpose of the call and method of payment, and presenting a business card.
- 4. Interview the customer The HVAC technician uses the Service-Right System Diagnostics Form. Plumbers use the Whole House Inspection form. The form lets the technician verify that the dispatcher quickly received the service request. The Service-Right form allows the technician to learn about the customer, the problem at hand, and other areas in the home that may present opportunities. It also helps explain the value of a service agreement. The transition to this form has a script embedded in the first header line of the Service-Right form. The HVAC script reads, "Do you mind if I ask a few quick questions about your system related to the operation, air distribution, health, and safety?"
- 5. Conduct a repair survey The technician then conducts a repair survey. They do so by using the transition script located at the bottom of the form, which reads, "If I happen to notice anything at all that would save you money, improve your system's operation, or make it safer in and around your system, would you like me to share that with you?"
 - a. This transition question garners a positive response of YES, enabling the technician to openly provide solutions to problems or issues discovered during the system survey.
- 6. Setting the customer expectation—The technician explains the service inspection procedures via the *Service-Right Customer Awareness Handout* or similar call form. The Service-Right Customer Awareness Handout is printed on single-sided 28# paper, laminated on both sides and spiral bound, as shown in the chapter entitled Professional Service Call Handling Process and Forms Procedure. The technician sets the service call expectation, asks the customer to show him the problem, obtains permission to access the home's system, and invites the customer to tag along.
- 7. Presenting solution found during system survey if the technician finds a solution(s) to customer problems or issues identified on the Service-Right System Diagnostics form, their Whole House Plumbing Inspection form—The steps are:
 - a) Identify the problem.
 - b) Identify the solution and associated price from the upfront Fix-Right Repair guide's System Enhancement section.
 - c) Present to the customer as a solution.
 - d) Ask the customer, "Shall I take care of that for you today?"
- 8. Diagnosing a repair—The steps are:
 - a) Identify the problem.
 - b) Establish a theory of probable cause.
 - c) Test the theory to determine the cause.
 - d) Establish a plan of action to resolve the issue and implement the solution.

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- e) Itemizing the repair price—Locate the repair tasking solution in a flat-rate upfront price guide (e.g., Fix-Right Repair Guide).
- 9. Filling out invoice—Take out a flat rate invoice or handheld device and fill out the repair tasking items to include a minimum of four repair items, (1) Diagnostic/Service Charge, (2) One or More Repair Tasking Items (s), (3) HVAC Recommissioning and Safety Test, and (4) a Service Agreement Discount Option. This method avoids unnecessary price complaints and systematically drives locking in your customer base with service agreements.
- **10. Informing the customer of diagnosis** The technician should present the repair in this proven 3-step service ticket presentation format:
 - a) State the problem: "I found your condenser motor has failed today."
 - b) State the fix and total retail price: "To replace your condenser motor today is \$ 772.91."
 - c) Show them value: Show your customers how much you value their business by offering our service agreement discount option. "However, I can save you \$115.94 off of this repair by enrolling you into our Pro-Tech Maintenance Program or Protect Whole House Inspection Program, where for HVAC, we can come back in the spring and again in the fall to keep your system as near factory fresh as possible, or for plumbing next year to assure proper operation for only \$13.95 per month. Shall I go ahead and enroll you?" This saves them money and shows them that their loyalty is appreciated.
- 11. The HVAC technician can open the price guide if a customer asks why this happened. Pointing to the associated repair diagram, the technician explains typical reasons for failure and the repair solution. The technician also describes how the customer could avoid these unnecessary repairs in the future by having one of your service maintenance agreements.
- **12. If the HVAC repair cost exceeds 40% of the price of a system replacement**, present the customer with the Repair or Replacement Decision Matrix.
 - a) The Repair or Replacement Decision Matrix has six common reasons to replace: the cost of repair 40% or greater on a new system, less than 12 seers, and multiple maintenance, including this one over the past ten years each, a solid reason to replace. The matrix is designed to help you present the customer with a clear and logical argument for repair or replacement based on these common reasons.
- 13. If the customer wishes to replace it, proceed with the replacement sales process.
- **14. Obtaining authorization to proceed**—The technician obtains customer authorization to proceed with repairs or replacement by initialing your invoice or capturing the customer's signature on handheld field management software. This step is crucial as it ensures the customer is fully informed and agrees to the work done before it begins.
- **15. Executing the repair** The technician completes the technical repair(s) and verifies that service ticket pricing is complete with all authorized work.
- **16. Debriefing customer** The technician reviews the repair, tune-up, or service on the flat rate invoice or wireless input device from a customer benefits perspective. If the service agreement is accepted, reduce the price per service agreement discount preferred rates. If

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not accepted, have the customer initially decline and get the customer's signature. If they are not a service agreement customer, offer the customer the discount again if they join today.

- **17. Call completion** The technician collects payment, procedures the paperwork, or transmits the wireless data.
- 18. Friends & Family Coupon The technician explains how referral coupons work for customers' friends and neighbors. This coupon is a great way to encourage your customers to refer their friends and family to your business, and it provides a discount to both the new customer and the referring customer.
- 19. Review system condition report the HVAC technician completes and explains how the customer can improve comfort, energy savings, and indoor air quality via the System Condition Report. The System Condition Report states that 37 things may still need attention, including harvesting post-call. The technician signs this document with the custom sign, distributes a copy to the customer, and keeps a copy for the office to conduct post-call harvesting of things that need attention.
- **20. Debrief Office** The technician debriefs with the dispatcher (even if using field software) and gets his next call. Debriefing typically includes:
 - a) Actual hours are billed to the service ticket/job.
 - b) Hours billed to the customer per service ticket/job.
 - c) Sale price per service ticket/job
 - d) Was a service agreement or system enhancement sold?
 - e) If there is a replacement lead for sales
 - f) Callback's status
- **21. Post-Service Call Close Out:** The dispatcher enters the call completion information on the Customer Care Call Form or their field management software.
- **22. Calling customer to advise of return visit response time**—If the service requires a return visit to complete, place the call back on schedule, along with the technician providing repair hours to complete the repair. The technician/dispatcher and homeowner set the date and time for the return visit and enter it on the Customer Care Call Form or into their field management software.
- **23.** Happy call to the customer Follow up on the completed service. The company should follow up on any customer response card with ratings below eight on a 10-point scale.

SERVICE AGREEMENTS INCREASE BUSINESS SELL VALUE

When you get ready to sell a service business, buyers will want you to separate your business's cash engine from the business's physical assets. From a business's value standpoint, service agreements and repair service each other. For example, a contractor finds that for every 1 dollar they have in service agreements, they get another \$128 in repair services.

The sell value of the business's cash engine is calculated by multiplying the total service agreement and repair services' net profits by six or more. In contrast, the sell value of the replacement business portion of the cash engine is calculated by only 1.5 times net profits. This results in service agreements and associated repair services being viewed by bankers as renewable revenue streams, adding to the business's sell value.

Service agreement customers are *voluntarily bound* to you and your company, protecting future revenue. Service agreements enable your company to start each new year with a higher base of future constant and recurring payments. Service agreement customers cannot quickly move to another service provider without losing the discount. When service agreements are paid monthly in advance, your business is sustainable by providing positive cash flows into the industry.

Contractors offer service agreements for these key reasons:

- To meet their customer's requirements
- To increase profits and business value
- To lower overhead labor costs during slow periods in the spring and fall.

Customer Benefits of a Service Agreement:

- Guaranteed priority fast response
- Avoiding expensive repairs and equipment downtimes
- Maintaining proper comfort and indoor air quality
- Maximizing energy cost savings
- Maximize operating cost savings.
- Extend the equipment life.
- Eliminate all purchase liability and technical risks.
- Maximize operating cost savings.
- Improved indoor air quality.
- Programmed maintenance performed around customer schedules.
- Includes standby technical support.

How do you Import the Fix-Right data into Accounting or Dispatching Software?

• Integrating your Fix-Right Repair Guide with your accounting and/or dispatching software can streamline your office activity. We provide a data table for imports compatible with your QuickBooks or filed management software. Simply email us for an import file.

JOINHVACSUCCESS

HVACPro Business Development Program provides a one-stop, right at your desktop, complete HVAC service business operating resource and training center, similar in scope to today's HVAC franchise models.