

# Ten Tips for Successful Upfits



## **1 Invest the time in up-front design/ engineering to avoid corrective repairs and retro-fits.**

What seems like a straightforward order and upfit may lock you into procedures or limit your choices and capabilities in the future. Tap into your upfitter's knowledge and experience early in the selection and decision-making process to ask questions, identify consequences, and review options that you will be comfortable with for years to come.

## **2 Ask for proof that the upfitter stringently follows certification standards and safety guidelines.**

Look for an upfitter that follows the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards and Regulations (FMVSS). Check if the upfitter has a certificate or other proof of compliance from the vehicle's OEM. Look to see if the upfitter is identified in the NTEA's Member Verification Program (MVP), or can provide proof of their National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) registration.

## **3 Work with a distributor/upfitter with expertise in your vocation/industry.**

An upfitter that knows your industry or how your crews work can help make you more productive and operate safer. Ask to see examples of similar upfits with similar challenges to yours.

## **4 Consider the upfitter's selection of products/brands and the ease of getting replacement parts.**

Your upfitter should have an almost seamless relationship with manufacturers and suppliers when it comes to getting the products and brands you want. Think about how easy, or how difficult it will be to order replacement parts and get fast delivery, avoiding unnecessary downtime for repairs.

**5 Get your upfitter to commit to solid delivery times and locations, maintain accurate records, and provide no-gap warranties.**

Your vehicle upfitter can keep you rolling or put your operation in jeopardy with delays, regulatory infractions, or by exposing your assets to increased risk. Look at how they run their business to decide if they are deserving of yours.

**6 Work with someone who understands how to engineer value and provide cost-saving ideas.**

Up front costs aren't the whole story. Understanding Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), including weight issues, fuel costs, and ongoing maintenance should be discussed at the beginning. Work with an upfitter who will advise you on alternate materials, new fabrication techniques, pre-built options, or pool/pipeline programs.

**7 Outfit your vehicles with your maintenance capabilities and available resources in mind.**

Let your upfitter know how involved you'll be in the upfit process. Inform them up-front if you will be repairing or maintaining your vehicles in-house, or if you're looking for a nationwide network of service technicians to follow a uniform standard. Make the upfitter aware of your vehicle and equipment replacement cycles.

**8 Consider the time-savings of assigning non-core fleet management tasks to your upfitter.**

Most fleet managers have seen an increase in their responsibilities, but a decrease in their staff. Assigning some of the administrative and record-keeping responsibilities of fleet management to your upfitter would allow you to focus on your core tasks. You already trust them with your vehicles and your employee's safety.

**9 Have a plan for phasing in "green" technologies that make sense for your business.**

There is an ever-evolving, ever-increasing, offering of new products and technologies that can make your fleet more "green". Discuss your goals with an upfitter that is experienced with alternate fuel upfits, weight reduction methods, PTO regulators, LED lighting, and other products and systems.

**10 Evaluate technical knowledge, training, and innovation.**

Vehicle upfits are more complex and technically demanding than ever. More is at stake with every new regulation, product, or discovery. An expert upfitter is an invaluable advisor on innovations like preventative design, alternative energy sources, telematics, and more.



**This Work Truck Upfit Checklist is brought to you by Auto Truck Group**

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