



Master Samurai Tech
LEADING APPLIANCE EXPERTS

Growing Your Team With Master Samurai Tech

a.k.a “How To Build a Tech”

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www.MasterSamuraiTech.com

The Solution to the Tech Shortage Problem

With small businesses, it's a short step from just enough work to flat-out swamped. And nearly every appliance repair business owner we talk to these days is in or near that "swamped" state.

On the one hand it's great that you're getting so much business, but on the other hand you're having to schedule jobs too far out. You know that this can only go on for so long before the calls stagnate as your customers start shopping around for someone who can come sooner.

The solution seems obvious: hire more techs. But that comes with its own world of difficulties. Fortunately, we at **Master Samurai Tech can help you out.**

Let's break down your options. There are **two ways to grow your crew** of appliance techs. 1) hire experienced techs, or 2) hire novices and train in-house.

Finding an experienced tech to hire is difficult, and even if you can find someone who is looking for a job change, that comes with some **downsides.**

- They may have habits or practices that aren't to your liking, since they were trained elsewhere.
- Their technical abilities might not be as sharp as you want them to be.
- Techs with some experience are often resistant to taking additional training.
- You will have to pay them a higher salary right off the bat, before you know how effective they are and how compatible they will be with your company.

What we have seen over the years is a steady increase in service companies hiring inexperienced folks with potential, and then training them in-house. This way they can grow a strong team of techs with the same set of core skills and values.

That outcome probably sounds great to you, but the process of getting them trained may seem difficult and time consuming. We know you are busy and anxious to get more techs rolling.

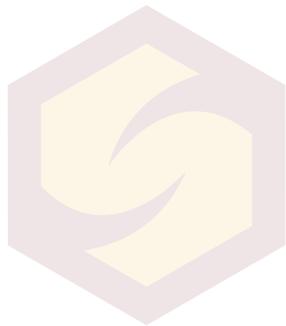
Here's the good news: **you can cost-effectively outsource most of your training to Master Samurai Tech.**

With MST training as your foundation, you can create a system at your company to take a new hire and get him or her running service calls independently in a matter of months.

Since 2014, Master Samurai Tech has been the training partner for hundreds of appliance businesses around the globe, training thousands of techs. We've learned a lot about how to take a person with good potential and have them running service calls independently in 6-9 months. That is the typical amount of time that business owners have told us it takes for someone who has no significant experience with appliance repair. Some folks will come up to speed more quickly if they have job experience that involved similar skills.

Here's a breakdown of how it works. There is lots of room for variety--for you to make the training program fit your company. But everyone needs a starting point, so here we'll share the practices that have been proven to be successful for other companies.

We'll start with the hiring process, then describe the training.



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1. Hiring

You probably already know what you are looking for in terms of character: good work ethic, friendly, honest, presentable, etc. But what about technical aptitude? Here's what we would look for in a good prospect:

- Education: High school diploma or GED (at a minimum) with decent math and science grades (see note)
- Evidence of technical curiosity and problem-solving skills - electronics kits, history of taking things apart to “see how they work”, doing their own maintenance/repairs in their home, etc.
- Evidence of mechanical proficiency - working on engines, building models or rockets, etc.
- Any other technical training or job experience during or after high school

Note about grades: some folks are bright with good potential, but weren't very comfortable or successful in an academic environment, so poor grades isn't an automatic “no.” However, being able to do basic math is a good proxy for having the mental ability to do electrical troubleshooting.

What we've seen is that if someone isn't comfortable with arithmetic and extremely easy algebra, such as being able to see a formula like $P = I^2 \times R$ and know how to use it if you are given values for I and R, they will be limited in their troubleshooting ability.

If a candidate had poor grades, you'll want to probe a little further and see evidence of some technical curiosity and aptitude.

2. Job Offer/Setting Expectations

It is critical at the outset to let your prospective hire know that they will be expected to take online training courses once they are hired. The best way to do this is to specify your requirements in the job offer itself.

There are various ways to do this. Here is one example.

One of our clients, a self-servicing dealer with over two dozen techs, stipulates that a new hire will complete the “Technician’s Bundle” at the Master Samurai Tech Academy, earning Certification for the courses, within 90 days of their hiring. To fail to do so is grounds for termination. (They may or may not decide to fire a trainee who is slow, if he/she otherwise shows promise, but it’s a good option to have.)

A note about the 90 day time period: this company gives their trainees 2-3 mornings a week at the office to work on the courses, but if that is not enough, the tech is expected to do extra work on his own time. It would be unreasonable to expect completion of the Tech Bundle courses in that short a time without giving time in the office to do the courses.

During this probation/training time, the tech is paid a lower rate than he will get once he is running service calls.

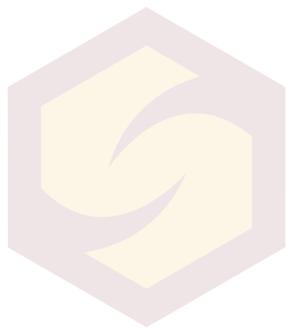
That just gives you an idea of how you can structure it. The exact details are up to you, but the most important thing is to **set the expectations at the outset**, and to have them **in writing**, either as part of the hiring contract or as a separate training plan/ agreement.

We have a sample training plan that a company can use as-is or adapt as needed that you can download here. <https://mastersamuraitech.com/employer-resource-page>.

There are also ways you can protect your investment in their training. For example, you can stipulate that if a tech quits within a certain time period - say, the first year of employment - the cost of the training courses will be deducted from the final paycheck.

Be aware that your state labor laws may influence exactly how you handle the above.

Pro Tip: Before you invest in the training program for your new hire, have them do some ride alongs with an experienced tech for a short period of time. This can be just a few days or a few weeks. If they are brand-new to appliance repair, then it's good to give them a first-hand view of the job to make sure they feel like it's a good fit for them before you pay for their training. During these ride alongs, they will be learning lots of basics from the experienced tech.



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3. Training Periods

Okay, you've hired a tech who has great people skills and promising technical aptitude, who has accepted your requirement to become Master Samurai Tech Certified. Now what?

Here's a summary of the typical training periods:

- **Trainee** - 3 months. Doing online courses and ride-alongs/shop work.
- **Transition** - 3 to 6 months. Blend of independent service calls, completing their coursework, ride-alongs/shop work.
- **Rookie** - about 3 months. Running calls independently 5 days a week, increasing the number of calls/day to the full amount expected. Lots of supervision.
- **Independent tech** - supervision can gradually shift to the amount you give to all of your techs. Continuing education is critical.

Remember, these time periods are "typical." Some guys will go faster, and some slower. That's not necessarily better or worse - you'll have to assess each trainee individually. For example, we've had some trainees who were slow to get through the training, but they had such strong personal and communication skills that their employer knew it was worth giving them extra time.

Now, let's unpack what will be happening during these periods.

4. The Online Courses

The focus during the Trainee period is taking the online courses and getting hands-on training.

The best scenario, in our experience, is for the trainee to do a combination of online studies with hands-on practice and exposure to real-life service calls.

Spending 8 hours a day taking the online courses usually exceeds their attention span and will result in less retention of the material than doing 2-4 hours a day max. A limit of two hours at a time online is ideal for most techs.

Also, there's a great feedback mechanism that happens when a student sees things on actual repairs that remind him of something he saw in the course, and vice versa. This really improves the learning process, helping him to get more out of his study time as well as the hands-on time.

Ideally, whoever is supervising the tech during training will have taken one or more of our courses themselves, but if they haven't, we have a short video that shows how the courses work on this page. <https://mastersamuraitech.com/how-the-courses-work>.

Bottom line: you need to know the [MST Certification requirements](#) so you can monitor your tech's progress and insert yourself as necessary. It is also very valuable if you know what we encourage techs to do in order to learn the material.

Key Talking Points as a trainee embarks on the courses:

1. Work steadily, but don't rush. Learning often requires repetition.
2. Take detailed notes in a notebook.
3. Print out and use any Study Sheets provided at the end of a unit.
4. Make use of the Ask the Teacher Forums if not clear on anything. (Don't ask fellow techs or google for answers.)
5. Remind them that all of their work must be their own (academic integrity).
6. Accountability - let them know how you'll be tracking their progress.

Does Master Samurai Tech supervise the students?

There are a few key points at which we will check a student's progress:

1. Core course Midterm exam. This is an exam that requires them to write down the answers themselves, not just do multiple choice. We grade it personally and then communicate back to the student (and supervisor) with feedback.
2. Core course Final Exam, Part 2. This is similar to the Midterm Exam, except with more questions.
3. Quiz/exam Reset Requests: if a student needs additional attempts to "pass" a test, we will look at their progress so far and interact as needed to encourage understanding of the material.
4. Ask the Teacher Forum posts: students are encouraged to post questions so we can give them personal help.

If at any of these points we see low scores or other causes for concern, we will communicate via email with both the student and supervisor.

Otherwise, it is up to the employer/supervisor to keep a close eye on the tech's progress and scores. This is a very important point. We've seen first-hand the difference in outcomes between techs with good supervision and those without. Make sure you're going to get the most out of your training investment by being involved.

We discuss the best ways to do that, including some downloadable documents you can use, on this page: <https://mastersamuraitech.com/employer-resource-page/>

5. Hands-On Training

MST provides “brains-on” training, you provide “hands-on”. In our opinion, the most **important** and **valuable** work a tech does for any job happens between their ears: the mental **troubleshooting** process.

But even someone who can read schematics in their sleep ultimately needs to transfer what they see on the neat and tidy diagram to that mess of wires and components that they'll find under the shroud or panel of the machine.

Videos are a great help. We provide a lot of videos that show the troubleshooting process in action. And for model-specific info, there are tons of free videos at parts sites (RepairClinic, AppliancePartsPros, for example). These are great for showing someone how to gain access to the various areas of a particular appliance and change parts.

A tech has to get comfortable working with both his hands and his head, and that just takes practice. More importantly, he has to understand how to make electrical measurements. Those always look so easy on videos, but we find that rookies make a lot of mistakes when they are first using their meter in the field.

There are two basic ways to get this hands-on training - either working on machines in the shop, if you have one, or riding along with an experienced tech.

If you have a shop, it's great to do both. Start in the shop, which is a very low-pressure environment. Then gradually give more time in the field.

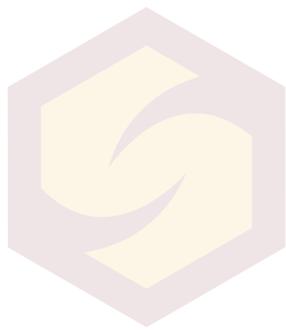
In both instances, however, there needs to be someone who is training them. And the experienced tech can't just do the work in front of the trainee - he needs to explain what he's doing, and also get the trainee involved.

Ideally, the experienced tech has taken our courses, so they can be speaking the same language. If the trainer or service manager doesn't reinforce the good troubleshooting habits that we teach, the new tech may fail to progress.

As time goes on, the experienced tech should gradually let the trainee take the lead on the jobs, including handling the customer service part. In other words, the trainee should act like he is the lead tech, and the experienced tech will just step in with comments or corrections (to the trainee) as needed. This will help prepare them for the

transition to independence phase.

Pro Tip: even trainees can contribute to the bottom line. Focus on training the new guy or gal to do simple revenue-generating tasks that they can perform independently as soon as possible (e.g., maintenance-type tasks). Also, being a “second man” when necessary for certain tasks is billable.



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6. Transition to Independence

What this next step looks like will depend a lot on how many techs your company has and your call volume. We'll give you an example, which you can adapt to fit your company's situation and the trainee's readiness. One good thing about this transition period is that your new tech will be generating more revenue.

Once your trainee has completed about three months of online training and ride-alongs/shop work, they can begin to do selected jobs independently, part-time. At a minimum, they should have completed the Core course before doing this. The hands-on trainer(s) can offer recommendations on what type of jobs the trainee is prepared to handle. In fact, many companies deliberately design their hands-on training to get their new techs up to speed quickly on specific types of appliances or repairs, to facilitate this transition.

A typical pattern would be to send the trainee out on independent service calls two to three days a week, doing three to four jobs a day maximum. On the other days, they will finish their online courses and continue to do ride-alongs.

Some small shops don't have much flexibility and will have to send this tech on all types of jobs as soon as he/she is reasonably ready. A larger company will send the new tech on selected jobs that appear to be more straightforward. Try not to rush the process too much, and be sure to give a lot of support.

During this transition period, a senior tech or service manager should go over the service calls ahead of time - either the afternoon before or the morning of - to help the tech with pre-diagnosis and point out any tips that may be helpful. The new tech should also have a senior tech that he can reach out to during the day if needed. (The goal is to avoid these calls by advance planning, but they will inevitably be needed occasionally.)

Once the tech has completed the online courses, he will run service calls 5 days a week, both independently and as a second man. This "transition" period typically lasts about 3 to 6 months, during which the tech will be doing more calls on his own, gradually increasing the number of calls per day.

7. Rookie/Continuing Education

Congratulations! Your Trainee is now a Rookie, running service calls independently 5 days a week.

He or she will need more supervision for a while than your other techs, but that will fade out as they build experience and confidence. They will also be able to increase their call volume during this phase to what you consider normal for your business.

During this rookie phase, you should help them to establish good habits for continuing education. Part of being a professional is continuing to learn and sharpen your skills. The courses at Master Samurai Tech are a great foundation - but there is always more. Plus, a student will only retain so much from their studies. Review and practice are necessary to become a master.

Besides any in-house training you may offer at your company, a great way for all of your techs to continue to hone their craft is by being active at our tech support site, www.Appliantology.org. As MST Students and/or Alumni, they are eligible for a free or lower cost membership there. (Conditions apply - [see here for details](#).)

The tech-only forums at Appliantology are a fantastic resource for information as well as camaraderie with other techs. You can browse through topics, ask your own questions, and then start answering questions as you are able. It's a powerful way to increase your knowledge--much faster than just by doing service calls alone.

Another powerful asset at Appliantology is our collection of [Webinar Recordings](#), which cover a variety of appliance repair topics, including reviewing fundamentals to technological deep-dives. These are a great source of continuing education.

Some companies offer financial incentives to their techs for spending time researching and pre-diagnosing jobs. This is usually measured by an increased first-call complete rate, or by knowing what parts they will likely need for their upcoming jobs, based on their preparation.

Lastly, techs should be encouraged to take advantage of their [course access term](#) at the MST Academy. It is an excellent idea to revisit and review the material while they have that access. There will be many things that they will forget over time, so periodic refreshers can really help them to up their game quickly as they are either transitioning or already running calls independently.

8. Training for “Experienced” Techs

Many of the techniques that we’ve described above can be used to **help your current techs up their game**. There are a lot of folks working in the trade today that have experience, but struggle with troubleshooting anytime there is a problem that falls outside of their comfort zone of pattern recognition (“if this problem, replace that part”). High call-back rates, low first-call completion rates, and longer-than-average job times are usually evidence of this problem.

If you have techs that fall into this category, they would benefit from taking some or all of the courses at Master Samurai Tech. A significant percentage of our students in the [Core Appliance Repair Training course](#) do already have a number of years of experience. Some of our biggest fans are guys who have been in the trade for a long time, and were glad to finally feel like real technicians who could tackle any tricky problem in any appliance.

- You can implement many of the same guidelines in this document with existing techs.
- You want to have a written agreement/training plan
- Make sure they understand the commitment and are on board
- They won’t need the hands-on training, but still need to be supervised to make sure they are progressing through their courses as agreed

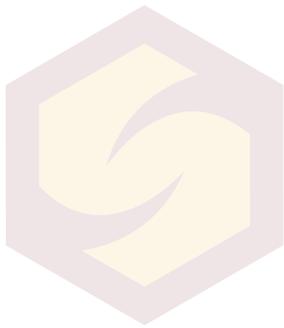
Techs who are on commission might not want to sacrifice their work hours/income in order to study several hours per week. But, studying on their own at home may or may not be the right solution. You’ll need to work with them to determine the best path.

9. Does This Really Work?

Yes! We were able to put this document together because we've worked with hundreds of companies who use our training on a regular basis to build new techs or to turn their current techs into rock stars. We are often told that our training is a "game changer."

Our [Testimonials page](#) contains feedback from just a few of the companies we've worked with. As online training has become more familiar and popular over the past few years, many companies have come on board and created powerful training programs that combine Master Samurai Tech courses with hands-on training.

Our training is so cost-effective and flexible that you can try it out on a small scale at your company with minimal investment, and then go (and grow!) from there.



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10. Employer Checklist for Building a Tech

- 1 Determine what your training program will look like before you hire your next tech, so you can include the requirement in the job offer. (You can adapt this as you gain experience, but you've got to start with a plan.)
 - a. Which course or courses will you require?
 - b. How long will you give them to complete? ([Click here](#) for course time estimates.)
 - c. How much time in the office to study?
 - d. What financial stipulation will you include in the job offer in case they leave the company?
- 2 Create your MST supervision plan (we have resources you can use [here](#))
 - a. If you haven't taken our courses yourself, watch the short videos on [this page](#).
 - b. Put the details of the training plan in writing and have the tech sign it.
 - c. Create your supervision strategy - will you track their emails, have them log their study time, and/or will you log into their account on a scheduled basis? (If you have 2 or more techs, we can also create a Supervisor Dashboard for you.)
- 3 Create your hands-on plan
 - a. Determine who will be in charge of this part of the training.
 - b. Set up a schedule for ride-alongs and shop time.
 - c. If opportunities for these things are limited, also identify disassembly videos from the free resources we mentioned in Section 5 above for the trainee to watch.
- 4 Set up a transition to independence plan for when courses are completed
 - a. Update the schedule to increase the number of ride-alongs and the variety of techs they ride with
 - b. Meet with the experienced techs as needed to make sure they understand the strategies and tactics, and to get feedback on the trainee.
 - c. Set up a schedule to do prediagnostic work with the new tech (afternoon before or morning of?)
- 5 Continuing education
 - a. Will you give them a little time in the shop for this or expect it to be done on their own?
 - b. Will you offer incentives to encourage prediagnosis and/or other participation in ongoing education such as participating at Applianceology forums?
 - c. When will their course access expire (or, will you pay for the [ongoing access subscription](#))? Set a reminder on your calendar to ask them periodically if they are spending time reviewing the coursework.