GET PRODUCTION

FIX A LOW PRODUCER, OR LET THEM GO

Letting a problem linger costs you more than almost any hire.

FIGURE OUT WHAT KIND OF PROBLEM IT IS

Before you decide someone's a poor performer, find out why. Most cases fit one of four types:

- **Doesn't know how.** A skills gap. Train them.
- **Can't because of the system.** Bad dispatch, missing parts or an unclear process. Fix the system.
- **Doesn't know it's a problem.** Nobody has told them directly. Tell them.
- **Won't do it.** They know how, they can, and they choose not to. That's a different conversation.

Owners often skip straight to the fourth. Very often the problem is one of the first three.

CHECK THE ASSIGNMENT

Look at what jobs they've been receiving. A low average ticket might simply reflect a schedule full of warranty calls. Compare similar work over at least a couple of months. Talk to the dispatcher. Then go on a ride-along, and watch for yourself.

HAVE THE DIRECT CONVERSATION

Don't wait until you're angry. Sit down privately and be specific:

"Over the last eight weeks, you've presented options on 30% of your calls. The team is at 75%. On the two ride-alongs I did, you recommended the repair but didn't show any alternatives. I'd like to understand what's happening and help you fix it."

Then listen. Sometimes you'll learn something important. They might be uncomfortable talking about money, or they've been dealing with a sick parent, or they think the options feel like selling.

WRITE A SHORT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Keep it to a page:

1. The specific standard and where they are today
2. What good looks like, with an example
3. The support you'll provide: training, ride-alongs, a mentor
4. The timeline, often 30 to 60 days
5. How often you'll meet
6. What happens if it doesn't improve

Both of you should sign it. It shows that you're serious about helping them, and it creates a record. Check with your HR adviser or attorney about how to handle this, especially if the person has raised a complaint, taken protected leave or belongs to a protected group. Apply the same standards to everybody.

ACTUALLY HELP

Spend real time on it. Pair them with your best tech. Role-play the difficult conversation. Meet when you said you'd meet. Plenty of struggling techs turn around once somebody takes the problem seriously, and those people often become very loyal.

TREAT BEHAVIOR DIFFERENTLY

Some problems don't get a 60-day plan. Theft, safety violations, harassment, being disrespectful to customers, falsifying records or being impaired at work may call for immediate action. Write down your rules in advance, apply them consistently, and consult your attorney.

Be wary of the "brilliant jerk." The top producer who insults dispatchers and refuses to follow the process can cost you more than they earn. Your team is watching how you handle that person.

WHEN IT ISN'T WORKING

If you've been clear, provided real support and given enough time, then make the decision. Keeping someone in a job they aren't succeeding at isn't kind to them or to their teammates, who are carrying the load.

Handle the exit with respect. Do it privately, briefly and in a way that protects their dignity. Follow state final-pay rules, collect keys, tools and tablets, and shut off access to your systems that day. Have a plan for their scheduled jobs.

Tell the rest of the team only what they need to know. Then spend some time on the lesson. Did this person come in the wrong way, or did they get too little training? Was there a warning sign you missed? Use the answer to improve how you hire.

DON'T LET FEAR DECIDE

In a tight labor market, owners keep poor performers because they can't imagine replacing them. Run the numbers on what that person really costs in callbacks, lost sales, bad reviews and team morale. It's usually more than the cost of an open position.

Sources: Service ProCall program guidance. General information, not legal or HR advice.

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BEST PRACTICES: HIRING AND KEEPING GOOD TECHS

MAKE IT A HABIT

What good looks like

> You know your turnover rate and why people leave.

> Every new tech has a 90-day plan and a mentor.

> Pay, growth and recognition are clear and written down.

The habits

1. Hire for attitude and teach the trade, with a clear path from helper to lead.
2. Plan the first 90 days: ride-alongs, checklists and weekly check-ins.
3. Hold stay interviews with your best people before they think about leaving.
4. Make pay plans simple enough to explain on one page.
5. Use a fair scorecard, and coach before you correct.
6. Remove the frustrations that make techs quit, such as bad routes, missing parts and chaotic days.

Signs it's time to get help

- You lose more than one in five techs a year.
- New hires quit in the first few months.
- Techs complain about routes, callbacks or the office.

How one shop did it: Barron Heating AC Electrical & Plumbing (Ferndale, Washington). Built its own 15-week technician school with classroom, lab and field time, and takes six students per class. Nearly 40 graduates, retention above 90%, every graduate passing the NATE and EPA exams, and warranty callbacks reportedly cut in half. Contracting Business, July 15, 2026

Where we fit: We don't place techs. ProCall Field helps with what makes them stay: organized days, fair scorecards and training.

More on hiring and keeping good techs