

# A BLUEPRINT FOR SELLING SYNTHETICS

**A**ny good construction project starts off with a blueprint, a set of plans that acts as a roadmap for building, if you will.

Often, running a fast lube is no different. There should be 'blueprints' for almost every activity, from personnel management to inventory control to customer service. And, marketing should be included in that list, as well.

Marketing your fast lube and its products and services is a broad category, though. What if, specifically, one wanted to know how to market a particular item in a fast lube? What if one wanted to know how to better market, say, their synthetic lubricants? One would start with a 'blueprint' for selling those synthetics, of course.

For years, fast lube operators — and many consumers — have known that synthetic lubricants offer several advantages over their conventional counterparts. For instance, synthetic motor oil generally has better low volatility characteristics than conventional motor oil, making it more resistant to oil consumption and 'burn off.'

Furthermore, synthetic motor oil is generally more resistant to thermal breakdown than conventional motor oil, meaning synthetic oil is less likely to thicken and form sludge. Synthetic oil also offers better low-temperature pumpability performance, meaning the oil reaches critical engine parts faster than conventional motor oil under cold-cranking conditions.

Synthetic motor oil is generally more resistant to



**SEE SYNTHETIC MOTOR OIL  
COMPARISON TABLES ON PAGE 60 & 62.**





Newman also indicated that oil companies have sent consumers mixed messages.

"By saying, 'Change it every 3,000 miles,' many synthetics manufacturers are implying that their high end product offers no real performance benefit worthy of the extra price tag. We sell extended drain intervals because our product is designed for extra life, which translates into the tangible benefit of convenience for consumers."

Newman said consumers also have a number of misconceptions about synthetic lubricants.

"Fears that synthetics are too thin to stay in the engine or that they might damage seals are still with us even though this is ancient history. Compatibility concerns can also be an issue. I met a woman last year who believed erroneously that you could not put synthetics in a car that had already had petroleum oil in it, as if there would be some kind of reaction like the results of mixing oil and water."

According to Newman, more consumers than ever before have now heard of synthetics and are aware of at least some of their benefits.

"Premium synthetic motor oils offer better protection and performance, key benefits for today's vehicles, which can be hefty investments," said Newman. "Engines run cooler, start easier and can experience better mileage with synthetic motor oils. And, if you sell a product that extends drain intervals, it provides consumers with convenience without compromising protection."

Newman said it can also be helpful to have literature on hand that can educate consumers about the value of synthetic motor oils.

"Ultimately it comes down to this," said Newman. "When an owner or manager of a fast lube finally realizes that they make more profits with less effort by selling synthetics, that's when synthetics start selling."

"It is important to price for profits, but when lube operators are convinced of their value, we've found that it is not difficult to sell synthetic motor oils, even at premium prices."

### **STEP THREE: PRESENT THE FACTS**

"Convincing consumers that the benefits of synthetic motor oil outweigh the added cost poses a challenge for most fast lube operators," said Scot Clark, director of Trade Marketing for Castrol North America.

"One of the biggest reasons for this lack of information. Consumers are

not provided with the knowledge as to how synthetic motor oil can benefit their vehicle's engine. The best way a fast lube can market synthetic lubricants is by educating customers about the choices they have now and what is to come. This is what will grow the category."

Clark said that consumers should be educated about several characteristics of synthetic motor oils.

"Synthetic oils have enhanced thermal stability, which means that they provide a greater resistance to deposit build-up in engines. More simply, it means that they help engines stay cleaner and perform better, prolonging the life of the engine and potentially cutting down on expensive repairs."

Clark also said that synthetic base stocks have improved volatility, which lowers oil vaporization and consumption at extreme temperatures.

"Synthetic oils don't break down, so they ensure the best wear protection," he said.

"Across conditions from low temperatures to extreme high temperatures, a synthetic motor oil can also offer improved wear protection."

Finally, Clark recommended reminding consumers that synthetic oil can flow more quickly to an engine's key moving parts and offers the best protection against wear during start-ups.

### **STEP FOUR: A STORY TO TELL**

"Fast lubes should focus on selling synthetic motor oil products by presenting a quality story. This includes how the products will provide superior performance and engine protection during normal drain intervals," said Paul McCusker, product manager of Automotive Lubricants-Installed Programs at Citgo. "If the fast lube is in a colder climate, the benefits of decreased wear during start-up is a key point that can be presented. There must be a story to tell and the proper supporting information provided about synthetics in order for the consumer to pay one-and-a-half to two times as much as an oil change with conventional motor oil. If the operator believes in the benefits, then that belief should be conveyed to the customer."

McCusker said synthetic and synthetic blend motor oils offer a great opportunity for fast lubes to increase profits and provide a service to those consumers interested in purchasing and using the highest-quality lubricating products for their vehicles.

"Truly, synthetics provide superior cold weather starting performance and additional protection against sludge, wear and excessive oil thickening due to high temperature stress from today's engines versus their conventional counterparts," he said.

McCusker did warn, though, that there is a risk involved in recommending extended oil change intervals, something other motor oil companies do regularly.

"Although synthetics provide superior performance and protection, the consumer must continue to change his or her oil based on the vehicle manufacturer's written recommendations," said McCusker. "Any deviation from that could cause invalidation of automobile warranties currently in effect."

### **STEP FIVE: A MENU OF SERVICES**

"Synthetics should be part of an overall slate of products," said ExxonMobil's Don Rudzinski. "Since oil change customers trust their installers, service writers are in a position of high influence. Three keys to synthetic sales are: one, installer education of a brand's product benefits including an understanding of the myths around synthetics; two, customer interface to understand driving habits and vehicle needs; and three, the service writer's ability to quickly relate those habits and needs to product benefits in order to make the proper sale during a brief customer interface."

Rudzinski said offering consumers a choice of 'good, better, best' oil change packages addresses their needs.

"Conventional oils address the needs of most consumers," he said. "But for those customers who need an extra measure of engine protection for their vehicles during stop-and-go traffic and hot conditions, a semi-synthetic motor oil would be a good fit."

Rudzinski added that consumers wanting ultimate protection, full-synthetic motor oil provides the best engine protection, especially for hotter-running engines and under extreme conditions.

"For synthetics to sell, service writers must debunk myths," concluded Rudzinski. "For example, synthetics do not void warranties and crankcases do not need to be drained or cleaned before adding. It is ultimately the consumer's choice what oil to put in his or her car, but the service writer's role is in selling the benefits to meet the customer's needs while increasing profits for the installer."

### **STEP SIX: THE RIGHT OIL FOR THE RIGHT JOB**

"Today's consumers are driving many different types of vehicles ranging from small four-cylinder cars to large trucks and SUVs," said Scott Harvey, senior marketing manager for the Quaker State Brand Management division of Pennzoil-Quaker State. "Fast lube operators have more opportunity than ever before to educate consumers on how synthetic motor oils can provide enhanced protection for the vehicles they drive and the conditions in which they drive."

Harvey said synthetics should be marketed with consideration given to the different types of vehicles and driving conditions involved.

"The industry's challenge in converting consumers to synthetic and synthetic blend products involves convincing them that an increased price, compared to conventional motor oils, adds up to increased value. We do this by explaining to them how the products relate to their specific vehicle and their daily lifestyles. This helps them see how the extra protection will pay off in the long run," he said.

### **STEP SEVEN: TO EXTEND OR NOT TO EXTEND**

As we've seen in previous steps, synthetic motor oils do offer performance benefits over conventional oils. However, opinions vary when the topic switches to whether or not service intervals can be extended with use of synthetic motor oils.

Companies like Amsoil, Sentinel and others recommend oil change intervals far in excess of 3,000 miles when using their synthetic brands. Other companies, like Citgo and Chevron, state their synthetic motor oil only protects for 3,000 miles.

Since fast lubes rely on volume for much of their profitability, an extended oil change could mean seeing customers only twice each year.

However, synthetic oil makers argue that two synthetic oil changes per year at an average cost of \$50 are still more profitable than three oil changes (the national average) per year at \$25 each, a difference of \$25.

The final decision regarding whether or not to recommend extended intervals is up to the individual fast lube operator. As several people have noted, a lube operator must believe in the benefits he is selling, and those lube operators who believe in the safe extension of recommended oil change

intervals when using synthetics will be the ones who sell such services in appreciable numbers.

**STEP EIGHT:  
PLAN FOR THE FUTURE**

With conventional motor oils getting better and better, not to mention more expensive, what does the future hold for synthetic motor oils?

Witness the recent introduction of conventional motor oils meeting GF-3 standards, not to mention the Ford- and Honda-specified 5W-20 motor oils. The quality has risen for conventional motor oils meeting these standards, but so has the price. It could be that acclimating customers to higher oil change prices with synthetic motor oils could prepare them for the day, which will almost certainly come, when conventional motor oils approach synthetic prices. In fact, there is some speculation that when automakers release specifications for GF-4 motor oil sometime in the future, motor oil manufacturers will almost certainly be forced to use synthetic or semi-synthetic motor oil in order to meet the new specifications.

**STEP NINE:  
WHAT TO OFFER**

There are almost as many different brands of synthetic motor oils as there are brands of conventional motor oils, with each brand claiming its own superiority. To cut through the confusion, we've assembled the major synthetic motor oil manufacturers, along with descriptions of their products and their contact numbers. Following, in alphabetical order, are these synthetic motor oil makers:

• **76 Lubricants** — 76 Lubricants Company manufactures 76 NASCAR synthetic motor oil and 76 Pure Synthetic Motor Oil. The oil is available in grades of 10W-30 and 20W-50 (NASCAR) and 5W-40 (Pure Synthetic), and all the motor oils are SJ-rated. 76 NASCAR 10W-30 synthetic motor oil currently carries a GF-2 rating, though new formulations meeting GF-3 and API SL ratings are being created.

76 Lubricants recommends following owner's manual recommendations regarding oil change intervals.

Currently, 76 synthetic motor oils are not marketed through fast lubes, though the company has plans to do so in the future.

Contact: 1-800-435-7761

• **Amsoil** — Amsoil offers XL-7500 synthetic motor oil, Series 2000 synthetic motor oil, and 100% Synthetic motor oil. XL-7500 is available in grades of 5W-20, 5W-30 and 10W-30. Series 2000 is available in a grade of 0W-30, and 100% Synthetic is available in grades of 5W-30, 10W-30 and 10W-40.

All Amsoil motor oils are CF- and SJ-rated, but XL-7500 5W-20 motor oil carries the new SL-rating. Further, all Amsoil motor oils are GF-2 rated with the exception of XL-7500 5W-20, which carries the advanced GF-3 rating.

Amsoil recommends an oil change interval of 7,500 miles or six months for XL-7500 motor oil, 35,000 miles or one year for Series 2000 motor oil and 25,000 miles or one year for all other motor oils.

Amsoil motor oils come with a war-

ranty covering oil-related engine failures and Amsoil motor oils are marketed through fast lubes.

Contact: 715-392-7101

• **BP Lubricants** — BP Lubricants offers Visco Supreme full synthetic motor oil and Visco Sport semi-synthetic motor oils. Visco Supreme is available in grades of 5W-30 and 10W-30, while Visco Sport is available in grades of 5W-30, 10W-30, 10W-40 and 20W-50.

All BP motor oils carry an SL rating, and Visco Supreme and Visco Sport (grades 5W-30 and 10W-30) carry a GF-3 rating.

BP recommends following owner's manual recommendations regarding oil change intervals. Currently, BP Lubricants does not market Visco motor oils through fast lubes.

Contact: 1-877-582-3727

• **Castrol** — Castrol offers Castrol Syntec full synthetic and Castrol Syntec Blend and Syntec Blend-Truck motor oils. Syntec full synthetic is available in grades of 0W-30, 5W-30, 10W-30, 10W-40 and 5W-50. Syntec Blend is available in grades of 5W-30, 10W-30, 10W-40 and 20W-50. Syntec Blend-Truck is available in 15W-40. All Castrol synthetic motor oils except Syntec Blend-Truck carry an API SL rating. Syntec Blend-Truck is SJ rated.

Also, all Syntec full synthetic motor oils, as well as the 5W-30 and 10W-30 grades of Syntec Blend, are GF-3 rated. All remaining grades are GF-2 rated.

Castrol recommends following owner's manual recommendations, but states that test have shown gasoline automobiles can go 5,000 to 6,000 miles between oil changes using

**20 Performance Comparisons Show Why Your Customers Should Switch to AMSOIL Synthetic Motor Oil**

	<b>AMSOIL</b>	<b>Conventional</b>
Cold Weather Starting	Easy	Normal
Cold Weather Pumpability & Circulation	Excellent	Normal
Engine Performance	Smoother, More Horsepower	Normal
Exhaust Emissions	Reduced	Normal
Wear Protection	Superior	Normal
Fuel Economy	Improved	Normal
Engine Life	Extended	Normal
Starter Life	Extended	Normal
Engine Cleanliness	Excellent	Normal
Long Drain Capability	Yes	Normal
Spark Plug Life	Longer	Normal
Reduces Engine Temperatures	Yes	Normal
Oil Consumption	Reduced	Normal
Resistance to Sludge, Coke, Varnish (Thermal Stability)	Excellent	Normal
Reduces Piston Groove Sticking	Yes	Normal
Reduces Valve Sticking	Yes	Normal
Shear Stability	Superior	Normal
Resistance to Viscosity Increase (Volatility Resistance)	Superior	Normal
Film Strength	Superior	Normal
Saves You Money	Yes	Normal

**When you compare ... there is simply no comparison.**

For more information call  
**1-800-777-8491**  
or visit [www.amsoil.com](http://www.amsoil.com)



**"The First in Synthetics"®**

Syntec motor oil.

Castrol does market its synthetic motor oils through fast lubes.

*Contact: 1-888-227-8765*

- **Chevron** — Chevron offers Chevron Supreme and Chevron Delo 400 synthetic motor oils. Chevron Supreme is available in grades of 5W-30, 10W-30 and 15W-50, while Chevron Delo 400 is available in grades of 0W-30 and 5W-40. All Chevron synthetic motor oils are SJ-rated, while the 5W-30 and 10W-30 grades of Chevron Supreme are GF-2 rated.

Chevron recommends following manufacturer recommendations regarding oil change intervals, and does currently market its synthetic motor oils through fast lubes.

*Contact: 1-800-533-6571*

- **Citgo** — Citgo offers Supergard synthetic blend motor oil in 5W-30 and 10W-30 grades. The 10W-30 grade is API SJ and GF-2 rated, while the 5W-30 grade is SL and GF-3 rated.

The company recommends following auto manufacturer oil change interval recommendations, and expects to start marketing Supergard synthetic blend motor oils through fast lubes in 2002.

*Contact: (918) 495-4640*

- **Cognis** — Cognis offers Emgard 2811 synthetic motor oil in the 5W-30 grade. Emgard 2811 is GF-2 and API SJ-rated.

The company recommends following manufacturer oil change recommendations, and does not currently offer its product through fast lubes.

*Contact: (513) 482-2262*

- **Conoco** — Conoco manufactures Syncon High Performance synthetic motor oil in grades of 5W-30, 10W-30 and 15W-50. All oil grades are SJ and GF-2 rated.

The company indicated that it markets its product through 'some' fast lubes.

*Contact: (281) 293-5907*

- **Equilon** — Equilon Lubricants manufactures synthetic and synthetic blend motor oil under the brand names Havoline Synthetic, Shell Helix Ultra synthetic, Havoline Formula3 synthetic blend and Formula Shell synthetic blend.

Havoline Synthetic is available in grades of 5W-30, 10W-30 and 5W-40. All grades are SL rated, and the 5W-30 and 10W-30 motor oils are

GF-3 rated.

Shell Helix Ultra is available in a 5W-40 grade, which is SJ and GF-2 rated.

Havoline Formula3 synthetic blend is available in 10W-30, and is SL and GF-3 rated.

Formula Shell synthetic blend is also available in 10W-30, and is SL and GF-3 rated, as well.

Equilon recommends following automaker oil change interval recommendations.

Shell synthetic and synthetic blend motor oils are not marketed through fast lubes, and, according to the company, there are no plans to do so. Havoline synthetic and synthetic blend motor oils are marketed through fast lubes.

*Contact: 1-800-782-7852*

- **ExxonMobil** — ExxonMobil manufactures synthetic and synthetic blend motor oils under the brand names Mobil 1 Tri-Synthetic, Exxon Superflo Synthetic, Mobil Drive Clean Blend, Exxon Superflo synthetic blend and Exxon Superflo Racing Blend.

Mobil 1 Tri-Synthetic is offered in weights of 0W-30, 5W-30, 10W-30, 0W-40 and 15W-50. All grades are SJ rated, and the 0W-30, 5W-30 and 10W-30 grades are GF-2 rated.

Exxon Superflo synthetic is offered in 5W-30, 10W-30 and 5W-50 grades, which are all SJ rated. Further, the 5W-30 and 10W-30 grades are GF-2 rated.

Mobil Drive Clean Blend is offered in 5W-30 and 10W-30 grades, both of which are SJ and GF-2 rated.

Exxon Superflo synthetic blend is offered in 5W-30, 10W-30 and 10W-40. All grades are SJ rated, while the 5W-30 and 10W-30 grades are GF-2 rated.

Exxon Superflo Racing Blend is offered in 20W-50 and is SJ rated.

The company will meet GF-3 ratings with certain of its oils before the mandatory licensing period begins on April 1, 2002.

ExxonMobil recommends following manufacturer-recommended oil change intervals.

The company does market its products through fast lubes.

*Contact: 1-800-227-0707*

- **Kendall** — Kendall offers Elite, Victory and SHP synthetic motor oils.

Elite and Victory are offered in 5W-30, 10W-30 and 5W-50 weights, while SHP is offered in 5W-30.

All Kendall 5W-30 and 10W-30 synthetic motor oils are SL and GF-3

rated.

Kendall recommends following OEM recommendations for oil changes, and the company does market Elite, Victory and SHP through fast lubes.

*Contact: 1-800-368-1267*

- **NEO** — NEO offers NEO Synthetic Oil in grades of 0W-5, 0W-20, 5W-20, 5W-30, 10W-30, 10W-40, 15W-40, 20W-50, SAE 30, SAE 40, SAE 50, SAE 60 and SAE 70 grades and weights.

The 0W-5, 0W-20, 5W-20, 5W-30, 10W-30 and 10W-40 grades are GF-3 rated, while the remaining grades are GF-2 rated. All NEO synthetic oils meet API SJ standards.

The company recommends oil change intervals that are two to three times longer than intervals for conventional petroleum-based motor oils.

NEO does not currently market its motor oils through fast lubes, but has plans to do so in the future.

*Contact: (582) 595-7208*

- **Pennzoil-Quaker State** — Pennzoil-Quaker State manufactures synthetic and synthetic blend motor oils under the brand names of Pennzoil Synthetic Motor Oil, Quaker State Full Synthetic Ultra Premium, Pennzoil Synthetic Blend, Quaker State 4x4 synthetic blend and Quaker State High Performance Premium synthetic blend.

Pennzoil Synthetic and Quaker State Ultra Premium are available in 5W-30, 10W-30 and 5W-50. Both brands' 5W-30 and 10W-30 grades are GF-2 rated, while all grades are SJ rated.

Pennzoil Synthetic Blend is available in 5W-30 and 10W-30 grades, both of which are SJ and GF-2 rated.

Quaker State 4x4 synthetic blend is available in 10W-30, 10W-40 and 15W-40 grades. All grades are SJ rated, and the 10W-30 grade is GF-2 rated.

Quaker State High Performance Premium synthetic blend is available in 5W-30, 10W-30 and 20W-50. All grades are SJ rated, and the 5W-30 and 10W-30 grades are GF-2 rated.

Pennzoil-Quaker State recommends following auto manufacturers' recommendations regarding oil change intervals.

The company does market its product through fast lubes.

*Contact: 1-800-458-4998*

- **Phillips** — Phillips Petroleum manufactures TropArtic full synthetic and racing synthetic, in addition to

TropArtic synthetic blend.

TropArtic full synthetic is available in grades of 5W-30 and 5W-50, while TropArtic racing is available in 15W-40. All grades are SJ rated, while the 5W-30 grade is GF-2 rated.

TropArtic synthetic blend is available in 10W-30, and is SJ and GF-2 rated.

The company does market its product through fast lubes, and recommends following manufacturer oil change intervals.

*Contact: 1-800-766-1020*

- **Sentinel** — Sentinel manufactures Sentinel synthetic motor oil in 5W-60 weight. The company states that Sentinel synthetic motor oil is SJ and GF-3 rated.

Sentinel recommends 10,000-mile filter changes and 40,000-mile oil changes. The company does market its product through fast lubes.

*Contact: (305) 625-6400*

- **Torco** — Torco International manufactures MPZ synthetic and MPZ T-4R synthetic blend motor oils.

MPZ synthetic is available in 5W-30, 5W-40, 5W-50 and 20W-50 grades, while MPZ T-4R synthetic blend is available in 10W-40 and 20W-50.

MPZ synthetic motor oils are SL rated, and 5W-30 and 5W-40 weights are GF-3 rated.

MPZ T-4R synthetic blend motor oils are SL rated.

The company recommends 9,000-mile oil change intervals for its fully synthetic motor oil, and 7,500-mile oil change intervals for its synthetic blend motor oil.

Torco does not market its motor oil through fast lubes, and has no plans to do so in the near future.

*Contact: (562) 906-2120*

- **Valvoline** — The Valvoline Company manufactures Synpower synthetic motor oil and Durablend synthetic blend motor oil.

Both Synpower and Durablend are available in 5W-30, 10W-30, 5W-40 and 20W-50 weights and grades.

All Valvoline synthetic and synthetic blend motor oils are API SL rated, and the 5W-30 and 10W-30 grades for both Synpower and Durablend are GF-3 rated.

The company recommends following OEM guidelines with respect to oil change intervals, and Valvoline does market its products through fast lubes.

*Contact: (606) 357-7000* ♦