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# Charge ahead in portable power

Stock portable power banks and chargers to capitalize on smartphone use.

**A** tool distributor these days may be hard-pressed to find a technician of any age without a laptop, tablet and smartphone charging at their workstation. Just that alone doesn't set the whole scene. Add in a scan tool plugged into the built-in power bank of a toolbox, and a rechargeable flashlight buzzing back to full-charge nearby. That might be closer to the whole picture.

"Several technicians use portable power on a service cart when moving around their shop," says Matco Tools Marketing Specialist Mindy Mechling.

Tool and equipment manufacturers across the industry seem to understand the need for technicians to be mobile and avoid being bogged down by dead batteries in the shop. If not by directly selling portable power sources, manufacturers are proving this by introducing more universal charging ports and rechargeable equipment into their product lines.

More and more tool categories are implementing USB charging ports in their products for charging convenience. The same charging ports technicians plug their smartphones into are now the same ports they use to charge their headlamp and portable speakers.

"As people incorporate more electronic devices into their daily routine, the need for portable charging solutions (power banks or tools that act as power banks) continues to increase," says Clore Automotive's Jim O'Hara. Clore Automotive manufactures battery chargers and service equipment, some of which support device charging as an added function.

Distributors can capitalize on this tool trend and technology culture by stocking portable power banks and using charging features as a selling point.

## Be the go-to source

Portable power banks are not hard to come by. After all, people of all industries need to power their devices. For distributors to become the go-to source for sales in this category, it comes down to convenience and quality.

"With chargers/portable power, you do get what you pay for," Matco's Mechling explains. "The product available from the professional tools distributors



*Storing chargers near the checkout area will promote impulse buys.*

Photo courtesy of Matco Tools.

is not the same product from discount retailers. You have added safety features, as well as length of use with the higher quality units."

Distributors should make sure customers are armed with the safest power solutions for their devices, Mechling adds.

"A must-have for portable chargers is smart charging technology," Mechling says. "Using too much or too little battery power to charge your electronics can weaken the battery over time and will cause it to not hold a charge as long."

Look to stock power banks with at least 5000mAh of power, suggests Horizon Tool Vice President of Sales and Marketing Matt Kenny, because it will ensure there is enough power to charge a phone more than 100 percent. Horizon Tool's AllStart brand specializes in portable power solutions and offers phone chargers and power banks.

"Distributors should always start with quality, the most critical aspect of everything they sell," Clore's O'Hara adds. "Quality products lead to successful, profitable sales and satisfied customers. Qualities they could and should look to are run-time, expected life and the ability to successfully perform the task assigned to the product being sold."

## How to display portable power

Small portable charging devices are a perfect add-on and impulse sale item for customers.

"Put [these products] in high visibility areas and maybe have your phone plugged into one," advises



**Upcoming topic:**  
Look for information on stocking and selling the following category:  
Aircraft Maintenance Tools (June)



**Streamlight**  
ProTax HL 5-X USB  
Rechargeable Light

Enter #120 at “e-inquiry” on  
[VehicleServicePros.com](http://VehicleServicePros.com)



**Clore Automotive**  
Booster PAC 12 Volt Jump Starter  
and Power Supply, No. ES580

Enter #121 at “e-inquiry” on  
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**AllStart**  
IonSlim Power Banks,  
Nos. 579 and 580

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[VehicleServicePros.com](http://VehicleServicePros.com)



**Matco Tools**  
12,000 mAh Power Bank,  
No. MV120RA

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Horizon’s Kenny.

Matco’s Mechling agrees, saying it may be wise to store them near the checkout area and add them to a ‘tote and promote’ bag.

“Everyone needs portable power for their devices both at work and at home, so chances are they might just pick one up and add one to their purchase,” Mechling says. “Being front and center, it also makes it easy to talk about while you are ringing them out. You can call out some of the key features, like the number of discharges/recharges (i.e. Charge a phone up to seven times on one charge).”

Furthermore, since it’s important to keep all products on the tool truck charged and available for demos, use charge times as an opportunity to showcase both power units and rechargeable products. Streamlight, for example, offers an electronic power unit (EPU 5200) which offers “instant charge” for their USB flashlight products.

When it comes to displaying tools and equipment where device charging is an added function, rather than a main function, simply plugging in a device will showcase this as another selling point. An example of this would be a lithium jump starter.

“More products are adding the ability to deliver ‘portable power’ as a second or third function, since for battery-driven products, such function adds value with very little added cost,” Clore’s O’Hara says. “In our case, several of our new LED work lights and flood lights add the ability to charge USB-connected devices.”

### Questions to ask customers about portable charging

Gauge customer interest and need by asking the following questions:

1. Does your phone make it through the whole day on a single charge?
2. Do you use your phone for work-related matters?
3. How many devices do you charge



### Make rechargeable features a selling point Advantages of USB charging ports in flashlights.

While the initial cost of rechargeable products may be higher, they are an economical alternative to using disposable batteries because the lifetime savings is significant, explains Eric Pike, Streamlight’s director of automotive and e-commerce.

Automotive technicians can rely on rechargeable products because once charged, they are ready for the job at hand and there’s no need to source batteries. For that reason, one of the biggest trends in flashlight technology is USB-rechargeability.

USB-rechargeable products give automotive technicians the ability to charge on-the-go from most any USB power source or AC wall adapter, Pike explains.

“Rechargeable flashlights give technicians the confidence that they will never run out of power in any situation,” Pike says. “Rechargeable products can be quickly and conveniently charged in their charging units or, for those with USB ports, from a laptop, vehicle or other USB power sources.”

Streamlight even took the USB trend one step further by introducing a lithium ion battery (No. 18650) that can be recharged with a micro USB. This new battery is available with newer Streamlight flashlight models that also accept standard lithium batteries.

“This new battery reinvents rechargeability by letting users charge the battery outside of the flashlight, eliminating the need for a separate charger base,” Pike says. “The micro USB port charges from a variety of power sources, such as a PC, power pack or 12V DC automotive power.”

- daily? What are they?
4. What is your ideal charge time?
5. Where are the power outlets in your shop located?
6. Do you ever work in the field without access to power?
7. Do you hunt, fish, camp or engage in other outdoor activities on the weekends?
8. Do your kids or spouse ever have a device battery run out and you can’t get in touch with them?
9. Why put yourself in these situations when you can carry a unit the size of your phone? **PD**