

Some people at Ford thought this was a great idea, but at first the Ford engineers fought it. They had to be convinced that, yes, drivers could go 9,000 miles without an oil change—but that 5,000 miles would align the oil change with everything else that needed to be done. They had to be convinced that a Mustang and a F-250 Super Duty truck, despite their technological differences, could be put on the same maintenance schedule. They had to be convinced that rebundling their 18,000 maintenance options into three easily scheduled service events—making maintenance as easy as ordering a Value Meal at McDonald’s—was not bad engineering, but good customer service (not to mention good business). The winning argument, in fact, was that it is better to have consumers service their vehicles at somewhat compromised intervals than not to service them at all!

In the end, it happened: Ford joined Honda in bundling its services. Procrastination stopped. Ford’s service bay, which had been 40 percent vacant, filled up. The dealers made money, and in just three years Ford matched Honda’s success in the service bay.

So couldn’t we make comprehensive physicals and tests as simple—and, with the addition of self-imposed financial penalties (or better, a “parental” voice), bring the quality of our health way up and at the same time make the overall costs significantly less? The lesson to learn from Ford’s experience is that bundling our medical tests (and procedures) so that people remember to do them is far smarter than adhering to an erratic series of health commands that people are unwilling to follow. And so the big question: can we shape America’s medical morass and make it as easy as ordering a Happy Meal? Thoreau wrote, “Simplify! Simplify!” And, indeed, simplification is one mark of real genius.