



## How to Bring More Customers to Your Service Department

How do your customers view your service department? You can easily answer this question by the number of customers

in service who purchased their vehicle from your dealership. The national average is less than 20 percent.

Some reasons this number might be so low:

- Product quality has improved, reducing the number of warranty repairs we have seen in the past.
- We haven't made introducing our customers to the service department a priority during the sales and delivery process.
- We haven't "sold" the knowledge and experience of our trained technicians, along with the investment we have in the latest high-tech equipment needed for today's vehicles.
- We haven't made it simple for the customer to make a service appointment, so they view the independent facilities as being more convenient.
- We haven't exhibited the necessary effort to earn their trust and confidence and impress upon them our desire to service *all* their vehicle needs, so customers get the impression early in the ownership experience that dealers do not need their business. This sets the stage for increased future defection of customers to independent service facilities for customer pay work.
- Once they drive off with their vehicle, we are on to the next prospect.

How do we remove the above obstacles that *we have put in place?*

1. Establish a process and hold key people accountable to ensure the service department is presented fully to each customer at the time of delivery of their vehicle.

The sales person should:

2. Emphasize the dealership's commitment to earn the customer's business in both sales and service.
3. Introduce the service manager and/or service advisors.

4. Discuss the dealership's highly trained technicians and the dealership's investment in specialized tools and equipment necessary to properly maintain and repair that customer's vehicle.

5. Review the normal maintenance required to keep the factory warranty and/or extended service agreement in effect and explain that the dealership maintains all service records.

6. Offer online appointment scheduling for confirmed appointments from your Web site. Review the ease and convenience this online service appointment feature offers the customer.

7. Log the customer into the dealer Web site, registering them to make online appointments and schedule the customer's first appointment, thus beginning the customer's relationship with the service department.

Once we've addressed the above and have the customer in our service department, what process will convince them to return?

1. Does your service manager exhibit enthusiasm and inspire the other service department personnel to want to provide exceptional customer service? You need a leader to enforce your views on outstanding customer service and its value. If this isn't happening, you may need to heed Tom Hopkins, who said, "If you can't change your people; change your people."

2. Are your personnel who interact with your customers in the service department happy to be working at your dealership? Do they view what they are doing as an important career or as "just a job"? Do they understand the customer on the service drive is the person who, in reality, signs their checks? These are critical areas you should research and then spend the time and effort necessary to be certain everyone is committed to doing whatever it takes to provide outstanding customer service.

3. Keep and maintain an appointment schedule. When a customer calls for service, it is tempting to tell them to "come on in"; however, if we can't accommodate them and complete the service on their vehicle properly and timely, we've lost -- not gained -- a service customer.

4. The service advisor should greet the

customer by name, letting them know you are pleased to see them. The advisor should do a complete walk around and discuss the customer's concerns and to be certain he or she understands exactly why they brought in their vehicle.

5. Suggest recommended maintenance based on mileage, fluid levels, service history, etc. If they have not been in your service department, ask them when their last service was performed.

6. It's important the customer understands there are services that should be performed to prevent a safety or mechanical problem. Always take the time to provide a full explanation of the services being recommended, why they are recommended, along with the benefits to the customer of having the service performed.

7. We **MUST** earn the customer's trust by only selling needed services. Trust is a huge deciding factor in a customer determining whether or not to return to a dealership for future vehicle services and vehicle purchases.

8. Let the customer know when their services will be completed and, if there is going to be a delay, contact them and communicate this to them.

9. Last impressions are lasting impressions. Be certain the last words the customer hears when leaving your dealership are "Thank you." Use an online appointment system that automatically generates a CSI e-mail to the customer after the vehicle is picked up, thanking them for their business, letting them know they may be receiving a survey regarding their satisfaction with this service and requesting they contact the service manager with any issues or concerns.

Taking these steps and addressing these points will take additional time and emphasis; however, this will be time well invested, as when we increase the percentage of our customers who return to our dealership for scheduled maintenance, we increase our opportunity to sell them their next vehicle.

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