



Drum Up Service Department Business

The true mark of a professional service manager is one who can increase business in a challenging market. Here are some pointers to help you do that:

1. Multi-point inspections.

One of the few techniques considered a "must do" for all stores. The service advisor should ask the customer at the time of write-up if the service department can perform the inspection as a customer benefit. Once the inspection has been completed, the advisor must ask for the entire order.

Many advisors are afraid to do that and only ask for part of the work. Let the customer decide. Follow up with customers who don't buy service work following an inspection. It doesn't matter who calls, as long as someone does.

2. Service clinics.

A great way to connect or reconnect with customers is by inviting them to the dealership for a free service clinic. The next step is to not sell the customer anything other than just renewing the relationship! Let them see you are worthy of their consideration. Some dealerships hold simultaneous promotions, such as new/used-vehicle specials and parts sales.

3. Free diagnosis.

The local competition is offering free diagnosis when "check engine" lights go on. Granted, they are interested in selling parts, and they perform an incorrect diagnosis, but they are building a "brand" and putting on pressure. This program could mean a sizeable increase in your repair business. If you are the first in your market it may give you a competitive edge.

4. Free alignment checks.

This technique has been a great success. The biggest challenge is the technical staff. Some of the technicians are still fighting over it. They receive no time for the check. But how hard is it to sell them on the fact you have won a big battle by just getting the car in the door?

5. Create VIP owner clubs for local businesses.

Many dealerships are near large office complexes with companies that have many employees. Make them members of a VIP customer program. I have one client who did this through a corporate human resource person who was receptive and allowed the service and sales managers to present their program to a group of employees. It was a big success. You don't need to launch an over-the-top program. My client offered pick-up and delivery service, if needed, free shuttle rides, and some discounting on parts and labor. They also solicited all makes and models.

6. Attitude adjustment day.

The attitude of your staff is an asset which must be managed. Consider doing something as simple as steaks for lunch, a fishing outing or a day at the races. Or a sincere, "Thank you." Do something that says: "This dealership appreciates you!"

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