



## *How Welcoming is YOUR Guest Experience?*

I recently read an article about how Chick Fil-A's customer service dominates the fast food market. But, according to the article, this is a market that's not exactly known for great customer service. They essentially are the sharpest butter knife in the drawer. What they do well however, is consistently perform at a level above their competitors. They maintain clean facilities. Their employees treat their guests with manners and consistency in their

processes. But put their customer service up against most five-star restaurants and they get blown away. They own customer service, but they own it WITHIN their market! That got me thinking about dealership service and where we miss the mark in so many cases. So, with our friends from Chick Fil-A in mind, I thought I'd jot down a few thoughts to help you dominate YOUR market within the automobile service industry.

Appearance is everything!

What do your customers see as soon as they enter your service drive or service write-up area? Is it clean and uncluttered? Are there out of date banners all over the place? What about tires? Most stores have tires in their service drive. But how are they merchandised? Are they priced and merchandised? We often get so busy doing business that we forget to do GOOD business. Try walking in your front door and just looking around like you're a customer. Make a note of everything you'd like to change or

update and you have your improvement plan started.

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Consider asking for help here. In many cases, your Sales Manager will be a good source of information...typically your showroom is very well maintained and very well merchandised. So, they are used to looking at the facility in a critical manner. Consider asking for their opinion to help get your process started.

Next, focus on your processes and people... starting with appearance. This is a tough one, but an important one. Do you have a dress code? In my opinion, the business has evolved away from shirt and tie being the norm into a more business casual atmosphere. If your advisors are wearing polos, are they all the same color, style, and embroidery? Many organizations have a rule requiring their advisors to wear long sleeves from Labor Day to Memorial Day and polos the remainder of the time. Supplying these shirts to your staff doesn't have to be a huge expense. There are a number of websites: Queensboro.com, LogoUp.com, etc. that offer very low-cost embroidery and discount pricing on merchandise. Consider supplying these shirts to your staff rather than requiring them to purchase their own. It's an investment, but a good one for the appearance of your staff!

Finally, but most importantly, what is their process in working with your guests? Here's where we can REALLY learn a few things from the Chick Fil-A folks! Everyone who's ever been into a Chick Fil-A and said "thank you" gets a

VERY predictable response...that's right. Every single time, their response is "My pleasure." Every time! Why? Because their management has made that the expectation. This is an important factor. How do you create an expectation? You MUST set the expectation in regular training, monitor performance and coach them on a regular basis. You simply cannot allow an atmosphere of "while the cat's away...". It requires hard work and a lot of effort, but you CAN turn the battleship on this one. You just need to keep the pressure on until this type of treatment becomes habit. Remember, the best athletes practice their craft every day. How often do you offer "practice" for your advisors? Practice time (or in your case, role playing time) is the time to fail. This is what prepares your staff to excel in the real interactions with their customers.

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As for process, while there may not be a "silver bullet" there is a time-tested method that has worked for many years and with many dealerships

based on our experience. And we are happy to share it with you. First off, you should have some steps outlined.... a road to the sale, if you will.... for your advisors to follow. Try to keep your steps to a minimum so they are easily memorized. And try not to get too far away from your normal mode of operation here. If you try to go too far too fast, it will be hard for your staff to sustain any level of improvement. What we typically recommend is the following:

#### ***Step 1. Welcoming***

***Greeting:*** Customers are NEVER an interruption. This can be a tough concept when your advisors are busy. But there's simply not another option. Their welcoming greeting should be planned out, rehearsed and always include a smile.

#### ***Step 2. Gather***

***Information on the Guest's Concern(s):*** The simple goal here is to gather all of the information on the customer's concern(s) in order to write a quality repair order. A quality repair order is one that is so well written that it can stand completely on its own merit. Take notes and be sure to show the guest

that you are listening and that you genuinely care about their needs.

#### ***Step 3. Confirm Your Understanding of the Concern(s):***

If you've ever been to a restaurant where the server doesn't write down your order, you know the feeling of angst of whether or not you'll get what you actually ordered. Don't allow your service guests to feel that same uncertainty about their repair. Repeat their concern back to them now rather than waiting until the very end when you have them sign the repair order. This will pay big dividends as we move forward in the process.

#### ***Step 4. Set a Clear***

***Expectation:*** Explain to the customer exactly what your technicians will be doing to correct and/or to diagnose their concern(s). Build value in that explanation by using terms like "diagnostic specialist" and "perform a full diagnosis". Let your customer know what they should expect to pay for the repair and/or diagnosis. And set an expectation of when they should expect to hear from you as to the status of the repair. This is critical, critical, critical! If you are



fielding status calls all afternoon, then clearly this step is not being performed effectively. Give them a simple time that you will call with a status of their repairs and make sure you make the call on time.

**Step 5. Gather the Administrative Data:** This is a bit of a break from the sales process designed to transition from the customers' portion of the agenda and over to your portion of the agenda. Rather than just jumping right into the additional sales process, now is the time to verify the VIN and mileage, ensure you have the proper mailing address, email address and phone numbers, as well as the preferred method of contact for the status call. Ask the customer "Is there anything else we can do for you today?" and "Do you have any questions for me?" This should close out the transaction from the customers' point of view and allow you the opportunity to now present any additional needed services.

**Step 6. Present Additional Needed Services:** Perform the walk-around and/or present the findings of the walkaround at this point. This is also the perfect time to present the menu of factory recommended services. Many good advisors, in the case of a diagnostic only concern will present the maintenance menu at this time and rather than asking for the sale, will simply introduce the menu and let the customer know that you'll review it with them when you make the status call later in the day. By using this approach, there is little to no pressure placed on the customer AND they get to make their decision on the maintenance services once they know what it will cost to address their concern(s).

**Step 7. Present the Multipoint Inspection:** This step is HUGE but often missed. We all know the value of the inspection and at this point in time, almost every store performs some type of inspection on every vehicle. BUT it's only

effective if the customer knows it will be done and has given their consent to do so. An assumptive close is fine here if that's more comfortable with your advisors "Mr. Jones, it is our policy to perform a visual inspection of every car that we service and provide a red, yellow, green report card on the findings. I'll have this done today for you and let you know if anything comes back in the yellow or red."

**Step 8. Complete the Transaction:** Write the repair order, print it out, review it with the customer and have them sign. This is a last opportunity to review all of the services that will be performed today along with pricing, time for status call, contact information, etc. Thank them for their business and show them to the customer lounge (if applicable).

Hopefully this information will help you develop YOUR process and evolve YOUR customer experience to a level that exceeds your guests' expectations. Remember, you don't need to be perfect, you just need to treat your guests with good manners, do what you say you'll do and be

consistent. If you can do that, you'll put yourself first and foremost in their mind when it comes time to select a vendor for their next service visit! If you'd like some professional help in developing a process and a strong retail environment for your store, give us a call. We are always here to help you and would be delighted to do so!

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