



Other resources in step 4g:

Video - How not to check the vehicle in for a scheduled repair

Video - The right way to book in a vehicle when it arrives for scheduled repair

Exceeding your customers' expectations

The age-old belief about customer service was that if the service was good and the price was right, the customer would keep returning to the business.

That was once upon a time.

The age-old methods of doing business are long gone, and regrettably so has loyalty.

Workshops are competing hard to steal your customers. Intrusive social media and advanced communication technology are providing competitors with access to customers that was never possible even ten years ago.

It's not just aftermarket competition. The car dealerships are setting the bar even higher, with generous fixed price servicing and even free scheduled services and if they follow the US trend, dealerships may soon be using their service department to provide basic services for vehicles other than the ones they sell.

This means that workshops will need to do a lot more than what they believe is just good customer service if they want to hold on to the customers.

They need to start exceeding their customers' expectations to the point where they become raving fans for your business. Once a customer becomes a raving fan, they start telling their friends and that's the best advertising you can get.

Now this may sound like an impossible dream – what could you possibly do to exceed your customers’ expectations?

Luckily most customers don’t have high expectations about the service they receive from a garage or service centre. It’s not that long ago that car workshops were pretty grotty places that just did their job and nothing more.

Here are some simple strategies for exceeding your customers’ expectations – surprisingly simple in fact.

Put on a smile and be enthusiastic

The future tone of any relationship between humans is established by the attitudes displayed at that very first meeting. Why would greeting a potential new customer with a car problem be any different?

This first contact sets the customer’s expectation about the service they will receive and the ability of the workshop to do the job efficiently and successfully.

Just greet every customer with a smile and some enthusiasm.

There will, of course, be occasions when the service adviser will be handling a number of customers, and remember most of them will have car problems and may not be in a receptive mood.

To cover these times, all staff must be trained, and be confident in, the ‘meet and greet’ policy.

No staffer should ever walk past a customer without acknowledging them. There is nothing worse than a customer being ignored. Customers can’t always differentiate between a technician and a service manager, for example. All they see is a person who works in the business, and wonder why they are not being served or treated as a potential customer.

Make customers feel like you are expecting them

Ideally, the service adviser should have every expected customer’s job card and vehicle details ready at the end of each day for the following morning’s rush. When the customer arrives, the preliminaries are already taken care of, and the customer gets the feeling that he or she was expected.

‘Good morning Mrs Jones, are you dropping off the Commodore for its service?’

This small gesture projects a feeling of belonging to your workshop which helps to consolidate the customer’s trust.

Explain to them what is going to happen today

Treat the customer as if this is the first time they have been to a workshop. Take control and confidently explain to them what is going to happen and what the repair steps are likely to be.

'Just leave it with us and we will get back to you' is not good enough.

This is not exactly explaining anything and will most likely result in the customer making frustrating calls to the workshop to get updates on their vehicle.

'Adam will start working on your vehicle this morning so I should have an update for you by 1pm. I'll give you a call on your mobile then to discuss any service issues. The standard service cost is \$240 which includes all the basic parts and labour. We won't undertake any further repairs until I have spoken with you first. Is all that OK with you?'

Call them back when you say you will

After confirming the repair process, always follow it through.

If you say you will ring by 1pm, make sure you do. The last thing you should do now is plant any seeds of mistrust in the customer's mind by not calling when you said you were going to call. Note on the job card the customer's expected pick up time as well as the time you promised a progress update.

'Hi Mrs Jones, it's John from TaT Service Centre. We have just completed the service and everything seems to be in pretty good order. However, we have found a leak in the radiator. We have pressured tested it and it needs to be replaced. We have contacted the dealership and they have quoted us \$600 to replace it. We have rung around and located a good used one for \$350. We can get either one in and installed today while we have the car. Would you like us to go ahead?'

Get approval and financial commitment for all repairs

Approval must be gained to go ahead with all repairs. Be very careful if a customer says 'just do what it requires'. Nobody can make that comment, and mean it, unless they have a clear understanding of the price. If an estimate is all you can give, make sure you call the customer if it looks like exceeding that estimate.

You never want customers turning up at the end of the day without knowing what was done and how much it cost.

Make your story exceed the price charged

The overwhelming majority of customers don't get any satisfaction from spending money on their cars. They do get buyers' satisfaction out of thinking they got a good deal.

A simple way to do this is to make the story and explanation of the repair job exceed the price on the invoice. This is not being misleading and nor does it mean overcharging, but merely a simple sales technique to give the car owner some satisfaction for the hard earned money they are about to part with.

Do something that visually improves the appearance of the car and tell the customer

Always try to do something that visually improves the appearance of the customer's car.

That could vary from washing, vacuuming, cleaning tyres, using a deodoriser spray, cleaning the dash or re-attaching a loose mud guard. There is no hard and fast rule for what you should do but try to make it a policy that something the customer was not expecting is always done.

Whatever it is, make sure the technician puts it on the job card so the service manager can point it out to the customer at the end of the day.

Exceeding customers' expectations is not rocket science. In fact it's quite simple.

The challenge is doing it every time you deal with a customer no matter how busy you are.

The place to start is www.tatbiz.net.au/capricorn.

Just go for it!