



CAPRICORN
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Other resources in step 4d:

- Video on interesting workshop presentation

Presentation – you’ve got 30 seconds to fix it

Do you remember your first job interview or perhaps your first date and the effort you put in to make sure your appearance was just right?

Most of us instinctively know that the first impression really does count. Every big business that deals with the public spends squillions on their appearance because they know that customer retention hinges largely on how they and their shops or offices look.

In the automotive industry, some would argue that technical skill and experience should count more than office or workshop presentation. That might be true for those customers who have known you for years, but if you are looking for new customers – and who isn't – their impression of you and your business will begin to form in the car park and the moment they walk in your front door.

And when times are tough, as they are now with consumer spending tight, workshops need every trick in the book to make an impression on customers and that means workshop appeal, beginning at the street front, and employee image.

There's no great science attached to presentation. Everyone can do it, and it doesn't need to cost a fortune.

Sometimes, workshop owners have become so used to the way their business presents itself, that they can't see the wood for the trees. In these cases, the best idea is to invite some friends who you can count on to tell you the truth, to drive up to your workshop and note those things which look bad and could be improved.

Start at the most visible places, like the front of your building, the car park, the main entry and the front office or waiting room. You will be amazed at what a difference a coat of paint and a good clean-up can do in the front office and a by-product you might not have expected will be an improvement in staff attitude and morale.

Concentrate on those things that are immediately apparent to a customer, such as street appeal, staff uniforms, grooming and non-verbal communication. Combined, how these areas are presented can form an opinion of your workshop as competent and your staff as knowledgeable.

Social psychologists who study the impact of image have determined that it takes just 30 seconds for someone meeting you for the first time to form a whole laundry list of impressions about your character and abilities. These impressions will usually cover:

- Educational level
- Career competence and success
- Personality
- Level of sophistication
- Trustworthiness
- Sense of humour

Now 30 seconds doesn't give you time to pull out all your trade certificates, showcase your resume, or present character references. It doesn't allow any time to explain that you have years of experience, training and a substantial list of truly satisfied customers.

It's in those first thirty seconds that customers form all those different impressions based almost entirely on what they see – your workshop, uniform, smile, and the rest of your non-verbal communications. Appearances do count.

These first impressions will be lasting ones. When your visual appearance and message is positive, the potential customer you've just met will tend to assume that other aspects about you are equally positive.

Equally and more importantly, if your appearance and message is negative, that new customer may not spend the time and effort to discover the qualities of you and your business.

Appearances count in today's world – as much or even more than in earlier decades. But as automotive technology continues to accelerate, the importance of making a positive first impression increases, too. What worked five to ten years ago, does not necessarily work as well today.

So ask yourself: when was the last time you had a uniform change, workshop make-over or reception area clean up?

Amazingly, personal appearances count even when nobody else sees you. There was one interesting study which concluded that each of us has an opportunity to see their own reflection (in mirrors, windows or elevator doors) up to 55 times every day. That means 55 opportunities to feel instantaneously good, indifferent, or even negative about your physical appearance.

Remember, what you see in the mirror is what your customers see. Time to tidy up?

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

Just go for it!