



CAPRICORN

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Other resources in step 5e:

- **Diagnostic checklist template**

Diagnostics is the new big product – but it has to be sold properly

Diagnostic problem solving is the big new product of the modern automotive aftermarket workshop.

So if survival in this rapidly changing vehicle landscape is in your medium to long range planning, it will become evident that investing in diagnostic equipment and specialised training is a must. A few years ago, such equipment and training might have been considered a luxury – a sort of add-on to a busy workshop. But no longer. Unless you feel you can survive doing basic servicing, diagnostics may well become your mainstream business and if you approach it with enthusiasm, the world of the future will be your oyster.

Having the right equipment and training doesn't necessarily mean diagnostics will be plain sailing.

There are far too many horror stories of workshops spending huge amounts of time diagnosing vehicles, but only a fraction of that time being reflected on the invoice.

To make matters worse, this scenario will often point to a break down in customer relations which in turn could result in a lost customer.

Don't get us wrong here.

We make no bones about training and equipment being essential for efficient diagnostics. However, if we go back and look at where the real problems arise with diagnostics, it often has nothing to do with the actual diagnostics, but to how we communicate with the customer throughout the process.

To be blunt, far too many people in our industry really suck at selling diagnostics.

Workshops really must have the diagnostics sales process down pat – there is just no other way.

Handling an initial enquiry

Very often a loyal customer will pull into your driveway with a problem asking for you to have a quick look at it.

If you tell them you won't look at it until they open their wallet they will most likely not be your customer any more. If you jump in head first without any financial commitment you are most likely going to waste lots of time for which you are unlikely to get sufficient return.

A compromise is to spend a couple of minutes with the customer asking them questions about the problem and then spending five minutes looking at the car confirming what the problem is. This will win their confidence and puts you in a position to sell a diagnostic inspection.

If the customer is not willing to pay for a diagnostic inspection you shouldn't do any more work on the car.

Diagnostic price and inclusions

Electricians and plumbers don't come to your house and solve problems for free so there is no reason automotive technicians should be any different. Diagnosing problems for free is not good for the industry or for your profitability.

The first thing is to decide the price of your diagnostic inspection what it includes.

Here's an example:

- Road test, visual inspection, testing, scan tools, data, research and report.
- Time 60 minutes
- Cost \$100

Once clear on the price and inclusions you can confidently sell it to the customer. Take time to explain what you will do and how much it will cost.

The last thing you want is the customer walking away thinking that you will fix the problem for \$100. They need to understand that you will spend up to one hour on the vehicle performing a series of tests to hopefully understand what the problem is and what will be required to fix it.

Performing the diagnostic inspection

There is no point spending two hours performing a diagnostic inspection when the customer has only financially committed to one hour.

Whoever performs the diagnostic inspection needs to be very clear on the time commitment. They also need to understand that they don't have to solve the problem in the first hour. They do, however, have to have made sufficient progress to report back to the customer.

If, after this first inspection, the problem is identified, the customer can be given a quote for the repair. Regardless of whether or not they agree to the repair you will have been compensated for the time spent diagnosing the problem.

Gaining further financial commitment

If you haven't solved the problem within the initial diagnostic inspection time you need to gain further financial commitment from the customer before doing any more work. This process should continue until you or the customer say it's time to stop.

Regardless of the outcome, the customer should still receive an invoice for the diagnostic inspections performed. This shouldn't be a problem if you have gained financial commitment from the customer at each step of the process.

Vehicle servicing and diagnostics

Very often a customer may mention that they have a specific problem when the vehicle is in for a service. Too often in this instance technicians spend time trying to solve the problem during the service when they have no financial commitment from the customer. This just erodes any service profitability.

To avoid this happening you need to stick to your diagnostic process.

Tell the customer you will have a look at it for them during the service. Follow the same routine as above – spend five minutes looking at the problem as promise. If the problem can't be solved in five minutes sell them a diagnostic inspection. If they don't want to commit to that, no further work should be done.

To assist your diagnostic process a diagnostic checklist template is provided which can be stapled to your job card. The checklist will help ensure that each step of the process is correctly completed. Download it at www.tatbiz.net.au/resources

Diagnostics should be a lucrative revenue stream. An hour of a technician's time on diagnostic work should be valued at least at the same level, if not higher, than any other general service work. If you feel that time is being lost in diagnostics, it is time to review your diagnostic procedures.

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

Just go for it!