



With the reduction in vehicles coming across the service drive, due to vehicle quality improvement, extended manufacturer maintenance schedules and loss of service work to independent repair facilities, we must maximize the revenue from every customer we do see.

This can only be accomplished effectively at your dealership through proper planning, training and goal setting.

- **Planning** – A definite process must be in place so the advisor is fully aware of the service history of the incoming vehicle and is ready to greet each customer and make the additional recommendations for service for which the vehicle is due.

## Increase Sales, Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty in the Service Department

- **Training** – Your service advisors need sufficient training so they are comfortable asking the customer to purchase additional services. This training must be on-going and should provide them the proper word tracks, so they can be successful. Fear of rejection will come into play on the service drive as it does in any sales situation. If service advisors are confident in their ability to properly present the necessary services to the customer and do this consistently, you will see a definite increase in your average \$/RO.

- **Goal Setting** – When you initially put your plan into place, you should establish sales goals for each service advisor. They should be reasonable, measurable and reviewed on a monthly basis for adjustment.

Pull the ROs for the last 100 people who came into your dealership for service and review the service history for each, you'll find 80 percent of these would have had up-sell opportunities.

Once you have this process in place, it is imperative that you take a serious look at how you turn your less-than-satisfied and satisfied customers into *totally* satisfied and loyal customers, as this is a critically important step in increasing customers in both your service and sales departments.

As more and more incentives are tied to CSI, dealerships face increased challenges as they continue to look for ways to satisfy their customers and keep them loyal. This is most difficult in the service department. When a customer purchases a new or used vehicle, there is the initial euphoria of ownership, which assists with increased customer satisfaction; however, when the car is in for maintenance or repairs, we don't enjoy that same customer outlook. Many times, the attitude of the customer is more negative - from the inconvenience, cost or both.

The primary driver of long-term profitability is customer loyalty, and providing top-notch customer service fuels that loyalty. But acting on such knowledge is surprisingly complicated. To really please customers, you must know how they perceive their

experience in your dealership. Also, customer satisfaction is notoriously hard to measure and interpret. Customers describing themselves as "satisfied" are much less likely to stay loyal to your dealership than those who are "totally satisfied." Gauging their loyalty is critical, as it will let you know where you need to make changes and improvements. A number of companies employ secret shoppers who rate their experience with that company. Management will generally provide them a checklist and they will rate each area, based on their personal visit and experience. If you really want to know how your dealership service department is being perceived by your customers, you need to make a concerted effort to put yourself in the customer's shoes. Also, having a secret shopper is one way to gather unbiased feedback.

Good management means all associates at your dealership are on board with your goal of exceptional customer service. You then need to be sure your customer-facing employees have the information and authority to solve customers' problems. Next, create an environment in which people are motivated to want to provide stellar service and then teach your employees how to deliver great customer service. They should never hear you make negative comments about a customer who comes in with a complaint - they should understand that there are customers who are pleasant to deal with and those who aren't. Many times if you handle the most difficult customer's issue promptly and effectively, he or she will become your most loyal customer.

And, remember, last impressions are lasting impressions. Be certain that the last thing the customer hears when leaving your dealership is, "Thank you. We appreciate your business."

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