

## “The Presentation is Everything”

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Does the presentation matter? Here is a conversation recently overheard at a prospective client’s service write up desk. “Well miss, that check engine light could be a number of things. We have a diagnostic charge of seventy-five dollars an hour. You’ll have to leave the car here and if we find the problem I’ll call you with an estimate.”

***How Customers think.*** What has just been communicated to the customer? Here is what she is thinking. (a) They want me to give them \$75 for which I am getting essentially nothing. (b) Could they be so incompetent as to not have even a clue as to what the problem might be or what it will cost to fix? (c) If they are that incompetent should I have left the car with them in the first place? (d) No, they can’t be that incompetent or they couldn’t stay in business. (e) Aha, what they really want is to get control of the vehicle so they can call me at the end of the day with an outrageous repair estimate, which I will have to approve because I need my car. And we call ourselves great communicators.

***How technicians work.*** And what about the hapless technician? He gets a repair order for which he will get paid an hour. Assuming he locates the problem within that time, he then has his stall tied up while the service advisor finds the customer to tell her the bad news. The customer, who now is unhappy and suspicious, refuses to approve the work

and takes her car somewhere else. Where are the winners in this scenario?

Is there a better way to present the same situation to the customer? You bet there is. It’s called ***“getting a commitment to repair”*** and here is how it works.

***How to make sad into happy.*** First, instead of having the conversation at the write up desk, the service advisor goes to the vehicle with the customer, where he performs a visual inspection. Now the conversation goes like this. “Miss, the check engine light can be caused by a number of items but we have a computer system that will help us locate the exact problem. Usually these problems can be fixed for around \$300 but it may be more or it may be less. What I would ask you to do is authorize that amount to begin the repair process. If the problem can be fixed for less then you will be charged the lesser amount. If the repair is going to cost more, we will not proceed until I get your additional authorization. Also, while your vehicle is in our shop, we will perform a complementary 27-point inspection, just to make sure everything else is OK. If this is agreeable to you, then I would ask you to sign this work order so we can get started.”

Now what has the customer heard? (a) You are confident you can find the problem and fix the car. (b) She has some idea of how much the repair will cost and does not expect to hear any shocking news at the end of the day. (c) You’ve added some value and assurance that you do care about more than just her

money. This process takes a little more time up front but saves a lot of time later, and which presentation do you think is more likely to make the customer feel better about her situation?

Now let's take the car out to the shop and see how the technician feels. Wow, here is a ticket pre-approved for four hours of work. He still is authorized only one hour of diagnostic time, but when he finds the problem, he can start the repair immediately, and if he is within the original commitment to repair estimate, there is no need to consult the service advisor. Which presentation do you think is more likely to make your technician happy? Now all we have to do is make you happy and we will have winners all the way around.

***How service is sold.*** Within the service department there are three distinct levels of sale: the captive sale; the point of purchase sale; and the back end sale. The *captive sale* is the repair or maintenance item the customer brings to your shop. The *point of purchase sale* is the additional items offered to the customer by the service advisor, usually resulting from a physical inspection of the vehicle and a review of the vehicle history file. The *back end sale* is the additional repair and maintenance found by the technician in the course of his inspection.

It is important to address each level of sale separately because it is difficult to make a point of purchase or back end sale if the captive item has not first been resolved. Customers are not likely to

agree to spend more money until they have closure on their primary concern. Here is where the “commitment to repair” procedure starts to work for you.

Once the actual problem has been diagnosed and priced, your service advisor contacts the customer. If the cost is within the original commitment to repair estimate, the customer gets good news. If the cost is greater, say \$450.00, now the customer's expectations only have to be moved \$150.00, not the \$375.00 required in the first presentation. And, ask yourself this question, in which instance do you think the customer is more likely to approve any additional work the vehicle may require?

In no way is there a suggestion here to sell to a customer work that is not required or necessary. It's all about building customer loyalty. Bringing a car to your service department is a great inconvenience for your customer. If you allow that vehicle to leave your dealership with unperformed maintenance or repairs, you have just caused your customer a second inconvenience because they will eventually have to take the time to have the work done later. Your customer may very well go to your competitor for this work, or worse your customer may have a breakdown or safety issue because your shop did not do its job.

***Smiles all around.*** Getting a commitment to repair makes for three happy campers. Customers are happier because the approach is much more honest and straightforward. Because customers are now more likely to approve additional required work, you

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have saved them valuable time and helped to assure their loyalty to your company. Technicians are happy because they are working more efficiently and producing more hours. You are happy because you have happy customers, happy employees and a bigger bottom line.

***What we have learned.*** Not only does the presentation matter, the presentation can be everything. This is just one example how a simple change in approach, and some training can dramatically change the way things get done in your service department. All of our clients who have embraced this procedure have seen their profits rise.

***Want to make an assessment of your own service department? Send us an e-mail at [mmckean@ocd.com](mailto:mmckean@ocd.com) and ask for a complimentary copy of our Service Simulator Program.***

***Everyday our business is becoming more complicated, more difficult, more demanding, and more competitive but it is also offering more opportunity than ever before. Capitalizing on these opportunities requires courage, vision, and skill. It's a brand new world out there let's go exploring!***

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