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Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourselfless .

-- C. S. Lewis

Larry's Ramblings

When consulting with dealers the one thing I hear all the time is "my employee has already been trained"!

What these people are missing is a very simple fact; *"Training is the Key to Knowledge... Implementation is the key to success"* . Dealers and Managers should always be aware of the state of their employee's skills. They require monitoring. Just because your employees are doing something well doesn't mean they are doing it as well as they once did.

It is easy to spot rust-it's obvious and ugly-but we can't spot "pre-rust," the weakening of the original material. It's not failure that's usually the problem, it's the ongoing diminishing of the original state. That's why bridges are checked periodically and we don't wait for them to fall down to learn there's something wrong. It's why a car battery may "suddenly" die-it's actually been degrading for some time but you haven't noticed the indicator.

When you deliberately change, and don't simply repeat the "same old/same old," you force yourself to pay attention. But when you simply go through the same paces daily, you won't notice the diminution, the attenuation, the decline. Like the frog in gradually boiling



water, by the time you realize you're in danger, it's too late.

The answer here is conscious competency, not unconscious competency. That's why airline pilots go through the same checklist before every flight and on every landing. They're forced not to rely on habit, not to allow skills to slacken.

Maybe it's time to check for the rust, before your business and/or life fall down.

Question Asked and Answered:

Do people search for the cheapest surgeon when confronted with a major medical problem, or the least expensive attorney when forced to defend themselves, or the rock bottom consultant when they need help for their business? If so, they are way out of proportion. And this isn't about how much money one has in most cases, it's about having the right mentality.

From the archives

Tracking Results

A common thread that seems to weave itself through management is the lack of attention to detail when tracking business performance. That is not to say that this statement fits everyone, because the really successful managers pay attention to the details and establish a routine for doing so.

If you look at your three main priorities, they should include a bank, a customer, and a technician. Your job is to put money in the bank, and in doing so, you must work with your customers and your technicians. You need to have a set of processes and procedures for dealing with your customers and selling service, and another set for helping your technicians turn hours with an emphasis on quality. If you put the processes and procedures in writing, letting everyone know how you want things handled, you can hold them accountable.



We can all look at the statement at months' end or even the doc and they give us a dollars and cents evaluation that is history, but this does not really indicate what areas are performing and which ones are not. The areas that are key elements of your operation performance are: number of repair orders written, which is the barometer of how well you are doing in bringing your customers back for service, the proficiency of your technicians, multi-point inspections and up sales from those inspections, parts & labor sales per repair order, effective labor rate, carry overs, and menu sales. When you track these areas daily, you will know where problems lie when comparing your results to industry standards. It gives you the opportunity to affect the outcome of particular areas daily or weekly, not after the month has ended. You might call this, "managing your assets."

Managers often start this tracking, but few continue after a period of time for one reason or another. If you worked for me, I would insist that you track these areas so we would know what is going on with our business.

I often have a hard time getting managers to track individual technician proficiency because they do not see the value in it. If you want to improve proficiency, don't you have to know what each individual is doing? You can improve your proficiency by setting goals for the shop and for individuals. Post technician proficiency on a board (a dry marker board works nicely) and place it where it can readily be seen by your techs. Set technician goals, and talk to them individually. Tell them you need for them to turn "X" number hours, and ask if they can do it. If they nod their head when you ask, they just bought in. All you have to do is ask them a couple of times during the week if they are going to hit their number. If you are realistic with your goals, you will be successful in improving your proficiency, but it requires this kind of follow up.

The only thing left is managing your customers, and that is a whole different sequence of events. Then you can put money in the bank. It takes follow up and attention to detail. If you don't seem to be able to get the hang of it, you can always call our office.

Written by Ken Morley



Do You Have A Merchandising Plan?

Marketing is all of the things we do to convince customers to visit our Service or Collision

Department. Merchandising is all of the things that we do to convince customers to make a buying decision once they arrive at our facility. I see dealers spending thousands of dollars each month sending out follow up letters and advertising for collision customers. Then they completely forget to have any meaningful merchandising tools in place to convince customers to make a positive buying decision. Here are the most common tools I see; Menus (that are out of date or have no prices) some manufacturer banners (we now sell tires) a few Training Certificates and maybe a sample copy of a Lifetime Collision Warranty.

Here is a partial list of the minimum merchandising tools you should have in place in your dealership.

Service Merchandising Displays

- Tire Display with at least 50 tires of all brands and sizes
- Wheel display with all of the different wheel size and style options available. These look even better if they have tires mounted on them
- Accessory Display with a full line of both Manufacturer and Aftermarket Accessories available to your customers
- Worn Parts Display with at least one of every maintenance item on a vehicle. The display should also have the actual mileage of the worn part on it so the customer can see how quickly an item wears out
- Wall of Fame Display with all of your Training Certificates and all of the Certificates and Pictures that show your company's civic involvement from the United Way to sponsoring the local Softball Team



- Displays should include Brochures with package pricing for Accessories and Tires

Collision Merchandising Displays

- Ten things you should know before having your damaged vehicle repaired
- Copies of all the warranties you offer
 - Sheet Metal
 - Paint
 - Your shop
- Wall of Fame Display with all of your Training Certificates and all of the Certificates and Pictures that show your company's civic involvement from the United Way to sponsoring the local Softball Team
- Signs showing the type of equipment you use
- Before & After Photos
- A sign that indicates you have Low Cost Rentals available

Remember customers are 85% more likely to buy what "they can see" versus what "someone tells them they need". Please go out to your customer Write-up Area in Service and Collision and ask yourself this question. Is there anything here that might encourage me to buy something that I did not come in here for? If there is not anything then I suggest that all of the money you are spending on marketing to get customers into your doors is being wasted!

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Office: 5615 Harrisburg Industrial Park Drive, Charlotte, NC 28075

Mail: P.O. Box 621360, Charlotte, NC 28262

Telephone 1-800-708-7587

www.edwardsconsult.com

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