

Service Lane Profitability

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Successful Service Drive Processes Don't Take Shortcuts!

**Proc-ess (prăs`es) n. 1. a series of changes by which something develops.
2. A method of doing something with all the steps involved.**

(Websters, 1980)

Increases in customer satisfaction, customer retention and service department profitability don't happen by accident (or luck.) They happen because savvy managers implement proven processes that produce consistent results. Putting a process in place is relatively easy; but sustaining one is always a challenge. Oh, wow, can car dealerships roll out the programs...with great pomp and fanfare...only to see them die a slow death in just a few weeks.

Simply put, this should not be. Maybe we can learn the value of sustaining successful processes by taking a quick look outside of the automotive industry:

- Next time you need medical attention, try showing up at the doctor's office without an appointment, refuse to wait in the patient lounge, bypass the receptionist, ignore the nurse and go right into the doctors office. (After all, you're a busy person and in a hurry.) Proceed, then, to tell the doctor what is wrong and advise him to prescribe the medicine you've decided upon.

Rather obviously, that's not how it works. The doctor has a methodical process that everyone (including the patient) knows and follows. It includes a preset appointment (sometimes made weeks in advance), a thorough check of all vital signs, one-on-one consultation, a clear diagnosis, then, and only then, does the doctor proceed with corrective measures. Next, the doctor recommends preventive measures to reduce the chances of a reoccurrence and to promote overall good health.

If this scenario happens at the dentist office, the last item in the process is to proactively schedule your next teeth cleaning (preventive dentistry) and send you a post card as a reminder.

- Let's change the setting to lunch time at your favorite restaurant. You don't just walk in, sit down, and tell them what you want to eat.

Instead, they greet you at the door, seat you where they want you to sit, and bring a menu for everyone at the table. Next, they discuss the daily specials and make recommendations. After you place your order, they suggest upgrades, like a side of mushrooms or the death-by-chocolate dessert. Before you leave, they remind you that they sell gift cards and provide full service catering for your next office party.

Even if you've eaten at the place a dozen times, you still let the waiter go through the process. The restaurant has a methodical process that everyone (including the customer) knows and follows. If we tell them we are in a hurry, they still cover all the bases and stay consistent with their process.

Doctors, dentists, restaurants, and a host of other businesses have procedures in place that the employees methodically follow. The customers have learned the processes and they follow them also.

I'm sure you know where I am headed with this...others have consistency in their programs and car dealers should too. But, in fact, it's not happening!

Spend an hour on your service drive tomorrow morning and simply observe the action. Are your advisors skipping steps? Are they shortcutting the write-up procedures? Are they letting the customers take control of the process?

Let's quickly review the processes used by the most profitable service departments in our industry:

1. Meet & Greet the customer in a swift, courteous, professional manner.
2. Deal with the Primary Item...the reason(s) they came to see us.
3. Conduct a thorough Walk-A-Round that begins at the odometer, proceeds to the rear of the vehicle, and ends up under the hood.
4. Pull samples of the vehicle's Vital Fluids and show the customer.
5. Review History and Check For Recalls.
6. Provide a Menu to every customer.
7. Upsell Maintenance Services according to current odometer reading, time interval since the last service, and fluid condition.
8. Perform Quality Service done by factory-trained technicians.
9. Keep Customers Informed of their vehicle's status throughout the day and upsell additional needs the customer may have.
10. Professionally Deliver The Vehicle back to the customer.
11. Review the Multipoint Inspection Form with each customer.
12. Proactively Schedule Their Next Appointment to visit your service drive.

As a manager, I'll bet you have had all these steps implemented on your service drive at one time or another. Is your team following your process with every car,

every time? If not, why not? After all, these steps aren't rocket science...they are basic, successful service-drive processes that consistently work!

Consumers know "how the game is played" when they go to the doctor, the dentist, and the restaurant. If we stay consistent on the service drive, our customers will quickly learn our processes...and they will follow them! Richard Flint says "to be successful, we must have persistent consistency that results in consistent persistency." Winston Churchill simply said, "Never give up."

As the customers become familiar with the culture of the service drive, they become comfortable with our procedures. The bottom line is this: Staying consistent with our process drives customers to our service drive!

On a personal note, I look forward to seeing you at NADA in Las Vegas. I'll be at Booth #2773 on Saturday from 8:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. and again from 1:00 p.m. until 2:30 p.m. Then on Sunday, I'll be there from 8:30 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. until 2:00 p.m. I'll be conducting a series of mini-workshops on "Driving Service To Your Service Drive" at the booth. See you in Vegas!

CALL OUT:

Car dealerships roll out tons of new programs...with great pomp and fanfare...only to see them die a slow death in just a few weeks! This ought not be!

Charlie Polston is a Fixed Operations Profitability and Customer Retention Consultant with BG Products, Inc. He has trained over 2,500 Fixed Operations personnel nationwide. He has been with BG Products, Inc. for over 25 years. Charlie can be reached at 800-580-0024 or cpolston@bglisi.com