



AFTERMARKET



#ORIGINALWORKSHOPS

ORIGINAL ADVICE TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS

IDEAS FOR DELIVERING EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

C O N T E N T S

3

Introduction

4

What is customer service within a workshop environment?

6

The perfect start to a customer journey

7

10 tips for remaining calm and managing stress in your workshop

9

Poor garage review? How to deal with negative comments on social media

12

Will delivering great customer service in my workshop increase profitability?

14

Creating a customer service culture in your workshop

16

7 signs of poor customer service and how to avoid them

18

Improve customer service by developing emotional resilience in your workshop

20

Five customer service skills that every mechanic needs

21

Examples of great customer service

23

10 tips for creating customer loyalty and repeat customers

INTRODUCTION

This eBook discusses a series of customer service issues common to the workshop business. If you have a customer service question or issue, or if you'd simply like to see where you can go one better than your competitors, chances are you'll find answers and inspiration in this eBook.

Tips for managing stress, dealing with bad reviews, difficult customers – it's all here. It's all tried and tested too. We understand the workshop business because we talk to installers and garage owners every day; many of the ideas here are taken from conversations we've heard and comments we've read. Take a look, we're sure you'll find some good ideas that will work for you.

WHAT IS CUSTOMER SERVICE WITHIN A WORKSHOP ENVIRONMENT?

Think about how it feels when you're on the receiving end of great customer service. It feels like you're being treated with respect, that the people you are dealing with are really trying to be helpful and that they take a pride in what they do.

Is this kind of thing just common sense? Is it easy, something you don't even have to think about? Obviously it isn't, because we can all think of times when we haven't felt satisfied. Did we then keep going back to that service for more? Chances are we went elsewhere and never used that unsatisfactory service ever again.

Your garage business needs to get customer service right every time, because you need to keep your customers and win new ones to keep your business strong.



Here are ten recent statistics that show just how important customer service is:

DID YOU KNOW?

68% of customers say they've switched service providers because of poor customer service. – Accenture

59% of 25 – 34-year-olds share poor customer experiences online. – New Voice Media

95% of dissatisfied customers tell others about their bad experience. – Zendesk

Maximising satisfaction with customer journeys has the potential not only to increase customer satisfaction by **20%** but also to lift revenue by up to **15%** while lowering the cost of serving customers by as much as **20%**. – McKinsey

Customer experience leaders have more than a **16%** advantage over competitors in willingness to buy, reluctance to switch brands, and likelihood to recommend. – Temkin Group

76% of consumers say they view customer service as the true test of how much a company values them. – Aspect

Customers who encounter positive social customer care

experiences are nearly 3 times more likely to recommend a brand. – Harvard Business Review

60% of UK consumers prefer a balance of price and service and will not accept low service levels in exchange for a lower priced product. – UKCSI

97% of global consumers say that customer service is very important or somewhat important in their choice of and loyalty to a brand. – Parature

60% of consumers have higher expectations for customer service now than they did just one year ago. – Parature



THE GARAGE ENVIRONMENT

Here's a checklist of things that are welcoming and appreciated by the customer. They may not be possible for you and your business, but they are a good target to aim for.

- A comfortable, clean and spacious waiting area with plenty of seating
- Magazines and newspapers. Car magazines for customers who are interested in automotive, lifestyle magazines for those who aren't, and comics to keep kids busy so the parents can concentrate
- Free coffee and tea and maybe a fridge stocked with cold drinks
- Free WiFi
- A TV to watch while you wait

THE WORK

What customers want above all else is to feel that you are more concerned about getting their car into a good, safe, working condition than in maximising your profits. Profits of course are important and are what keeps your business alive, but a trusted service is worth more in the long term than a higher return in the short term. Never try to upsell more expensive parts or parts that do not really need to be replaced – but by all means offer options for replacements that will soon be needed as it may make this visit to the garage a more efficient and cost-effective one for the customer.

CUSTOMER INTERACTION

What matters too is the manner in which you are greeted. If you introduce yourself to the customer, shake hands, address them as Mr, Mrs or Miss X, this makes a huge impression and presents your garage as a highly professional business. Your customer will feel that if you take such care over customer service you will also be taking good care of their vehicle.

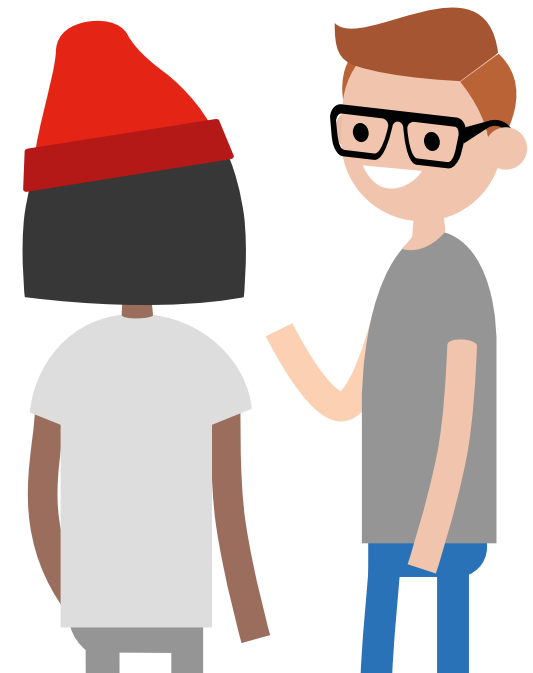
The same goes for whoever answers the phone or sits on reception. If this person can remember regular customers and take an interest in their lives, even with a simple, "Hi, how have you been since we last saw you?," this can make a hugely positive impression. Indeed, there is no reason why the whole team shouldn't be encouraged to do this when appropriate.

This friendly, caring image can be enhanced online. A website that shows pictures and names of team members demonstrates an honest and open business – if you can add any customer testimonials you have a web page that acts not only as a guide to your services but also a promotional tool that reassures and attracts old and new customers alike. It's an inescapable truth today that people judge you online before they judge you offline – you can make a great first impression every time by getting your online image right.

After the customer has dropped off the vehicle and you have evaluated its condition, call to explain the work that needs to be done and double check that the customer is happy for you to go ahead. This is an excellent way to reassure them that your primary concern is to give them a good service. Follow this right through to the end of the job by meeting with customers at the garage to run over everything that's been undertaken.

You may think that all this stuff is quite normal, yet many businesses do ignore such advice, thinking it will all just happen naturally. This is your opportunity. You can stand above your competitors and be noticed by doing such apparently simple but important and effective things. Ask yourself, how often have you received really great service recently? Service that you would tell people about? Or write about? Probably not all that often, which is why when you do experience it, you really notice.

Make great customer service a priority for your business and your customers will notice you.



THE PERFECT START TO A CUSTOMER JOURNEY

01 - A WARM WELCOME

Offer a comfortable, clean and tidy customer reception with friendly staff. This tells your customers that you are professional and deliver a high standard of work. Consider providing a TV, complimentary hot drinks, water and free Wi-Fi to keep your waiting customer happy.



02 - ASK ALL THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Gather as much information as possible about the customer (name, contact details), the vehicle (registration number and history), the job (what needs to be done) and other necessary details (e.g. regarding the guarantee or insurance), and suggest a time frame for performing the work. This enables you to:

- Connect with the customer.
- Make it quicker and easier for the mechanic to solve problems.
- Deliver a fast, efficient repair that pleases the customer.



03 - OFFER AN ADDED BENEFIT

A free add-on service is sure to please your customer, so why not offer a complimentary Vehicle Health Check? This will give customers peace of mind and highlight any issues that they may not be aware of.



10 TIPS FOR REMAINING CALM AND MANAGING STRESS IN YOUR WORKSHOP

Running a garage workshop can be very rewarding, but even when things are going well managing a business can be stressful. Anxiety can keep you awake at night as a series of questions run through your mind. Are your customers happy? Will they keep coming back? Can you cover your costs and repay your debts? Do you have enough cashflow? Are your employees happy? Will you be able to keep your best team members? Is your equipment good enough and futureproofed, and if not when and how will you replace it?

Mental pressure can be as tiring as physical effort, making you anxious and weary. You can't change any of these facts because running a garage business is stressful, what you can do is learn to manage stress more effectively so you can perform at your best and enjoy life.

The less stressed you are, the better the customer service you will provide.

HERE ARE TEN TOP TIPS:

1. Don't forget the good stuff

When you consider all the things that need to be done to keep the business turning, it's easy to feel negative. Instead, try to remember all the things that are going right and to think positively. Maybe even write them down – the process of

listing the positive things about your business could remind you that there are many of them you've forgotten and begun to take for granted. It's easy to forget all the good things you've achieved while you're being distracted by issues that need attention.

You could even pin your list up on the wall. Then, whenever you feel anxious about things that still need to be addressed, you can look at your list and remember that many things that used to be challenges are now achievements.

2. Prioritise your tasks

Prioritising your workload not only makes for an efficient workshop, it also helps you to feel calm. One of the common causes of stress is the feeling that there is just too much to do, which means you sometimes flit between tasks and achieve little on any of them. Don't try to solve all your issues at once.

Prioritise your tasks. Rank them in order of importance, just focus on one at a time. By doing this you'll make your way through the list more efficiently and effectively – with your mind and focus on the job in hand.

Some people don't like doing this because it makes them realise what a long list of jobs they have to do! Even if that's the case, it's still a more calming and productive experience

to tick them off one at a time than to try and think about all of them at once.

3. Write down your worries

As a business owner it's always hard to switch off from work when you're at home. You eat, sleep and breathe your business – that's what makes you successful, but it also drains you. You can easily find yourself constantly thinking about your business and the things you should be doing. If you worry too much about work when you're at home you're not actually achieving anything for the business and you're not enjoying your free time, which you need to do in order to get the rest you require for when you're back in the workshop.

A simple, quick way to escape your thoughts is to write down any problem, and/or possible solution you've been thinking over. Psychologically, you've parked the thought and 'saved' it. You can feel secure in the knowledge that the issue won't be forgotten about and you can come back to it when you are feeling fresh.

4. Target low-hanging fruit

When you've listed your worries, rank them in order of how difficult they are to solve. You may be surprised to see that the biggest issues may be the ones that are most easily resolved.

For example, technicians can be rapidly stressed by not being able to access the information they need to carry out a task – this may be simple to fix by improving the speed of your internet connection. By resolving an issue you can swiftly remove a stress factor that repeatedly affects everyone in the workshop.

5. Take regular breaks

The simplest advice is often the best. When you hit a problem, you can sometimes go round in circles and the only way to solve it is to come back at it afresh. A short break where you step away – even for just 10 minutes – can be all you need.

6. Look after yourself

Eat well and exercise. Good health is important to everyone and if you're running a business it's essential. Drink lots of water. Get enough sleep. Your body is better equipped to handle the stress of running a repair workshop when you're healthy and refreshed. Exercise also has an additional benefit in that it releases anxieties and stress soon after you begin. If you feel stressed it's often better to exercise than to relax.

7. Identify the cause of your stress

If things are getting on top of you, take a moment to stop and reflect on your situation. Take a deep breath and ask yourself exactly what it is that's bothering you. You can't get your issue in perspective and address it if you don't know what it is.

8. Talk to someone

Discuss your problem/s with your boss/colleagues/employees/family. It is in the other people's interest, as well as yours, to fix these situations. Talking to someone stops you from bottling up issues – sharing your issue often goes some way to solving them too as you now have two brains looking for solutions.

9. Invest in training

Easier said than done as it can cost money, but training can also save money – as well as reduce stress in the long-term. So, if you find a particular kind of repair especially stressful – or if there is a particular skills gap in your garage that is increasing pressure on you – consider more training.

10. Don't overpromise

Be sure the customer knows that their vehicle will be ready, for example, by the end of the day, not lunchtime. You will have happier customers if you 'under promise and overdeliver'.

Remember, it is of course important to look after yourself, but the less stressed you are, the more you will be able to invest in delivering outstanding customer service.



POOR GARAGE REVIEW? HOW TO DEAL WITH NEGATIVE COMMENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Like it or not, online reviews are now a big part of doing business. A recent survey suggested 60% of customers read reviews regularly, and of this 60%, 93% say online reviews impact their purchasing decisions.

“Any business owner knows that your most authentic and impactful advocate is a happy customer, and technology has made every customer’s voice extremely powerful,” says Eric Rea, CEO of Podium, the company that conducted the survey.

“Our data shows just how much consumers trust each other, and therefore how much these advocates can drive purchase decisions and grow brand recognition through online reviews.”

What’s more, Google is having an increasingly strong influence on reviews and ratings. The search engine now displays reviews and ratings from trusted third-party sites within a businesses’ Local Knowledge Panel. These appear under the title ‘Reviews from the web’, below details submitted to the Google Business Page.

How a workshop handles a bad review can be potentially more damaging than the review itself. If a bad review is ignored by a garage, or responded to in an inappropriate or unprofessional way, alarm bells may ring for prospective customers. Every business will get a bad review once in a while – it’s how you deal with it that matters. Potential customers know this and will look to see how the workshop responds to a bad review. It gives consumers a real-life example of how complaints are handled by your workshop.



THE FIRST THING TO DO WHEN YOU GET A BAD REVIEW

First of all, don't get mad and don't beat yourself up about the review. At some time, every business, however hard they try, is going to find that someone has left them a bad review.

THE SECOND THING TO DO WHEN YOU GET A BAD REVIEW

Do not respond instantly. Think it over so you don't say anything you might regret, you do not want to inflame the situation. Sleep on it if needs be.

THE THIRD THING TO DO WHEN YOU GET A BAD REVIEW

When you're feeling calm and objective, now is the time to respond. Start by thanking the reviewer for their comments – the fact that they have given you feedback, albeit negative, means that you can do something about it. Respond politely – your tone will reflect on your brand and your business.

If you think the complaint is justified, briefly explain the steps your workshop is taking to address the issue.

If you don't think it's justified, briefly explain your policy to show that you believe you fulfilled the terms of the agreement in good faith. If you are willing and able, you could offer the customer a further product or service, not as an apology but as a good will offering.

Resist the temptation to get defensive. Consider the criticism and explain how you made the situation right. If you have offered the dissatisfied customer a further product or service as a good will offering and they have still left negative feedback, make sure you mention this in your response – a prospective customer reading this review will see your workshop in a positive light.

It's easy to write off negative feedback as the unwelcome result of a one-off bad experience or the unreasonable demands of a needy customer, but even if you feel the comment is unjust, how you handle these interactions is crucial as that is what prospective customers will measure you on.



SOURCE REVIEWS FROM SATISFIED CUSTOMERS

Drown out the bad news with good news by sourcing positive reviews from customers that you know are happy with your service. If you know them well, ask them personally for help. Another good way to gather good reviews is to send a simple email message, something like this:

Hello [Customer name],

It's good to have you as a customer and judging from your last service we believe you're pleased with us, too.

We're currently asking customers to leave us a quick review on [Link to review site]. Will you help us? It doesn't have to be long message, just a line or two would be great.

Thanks for your time and your business. We really do appreciate you.

Regards, [Your name]

Many businesses do not engage with customers or ask them to leave reviews but a little effort could deliver such big rewards. Podium's research showed that 77% of customers said they would leave an online review if asked by a local business. However, only 13% of local business actually ask for reviews, leaving a potentially easy to access and powerful sales tool untapped.

"In essence, happy customers do your best marketing and they do it for free," says Rea.

"There's tremendous potential to amplify customer voices online – for businesses of all sizes."

TURN A NEGATIVE INTO A POSITIVE

No-one wants to receive a bad review, but you can turn a negative into a positive. Handling bad reviews in a professional manner may actually give you the opportunity to make a very positive impression on prospective customers.

Don't see a bad review as just a negative that's damaging for your business, see it as an opportunity.

WILL DELIVERING GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE IN MY WORKSHOP INCREASE PROFITABILITY?

Whatever the size of your workshop business, customer service is a powerful driver of profitability, not least because the cost of losing business through poor customer service is far higher than the cost of treating clients well.

“According to ThinkJar it is 6 or 7 times more expensive to acquire a new customer than to keep an existing one.”

SO, WHAT IS GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE?

Most would agree that it's about value for money. When you offer a product or a service for a certain price, the customer has expectations. At the very least, these will include a reasonable expectation that you will offer a basic level of support – answering questions clearly and simply, resolving issues promptly, handling complaints and properly managing expectations.

ALL GOOD AND REASONABLE, BUT WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH PROFITABILITY?

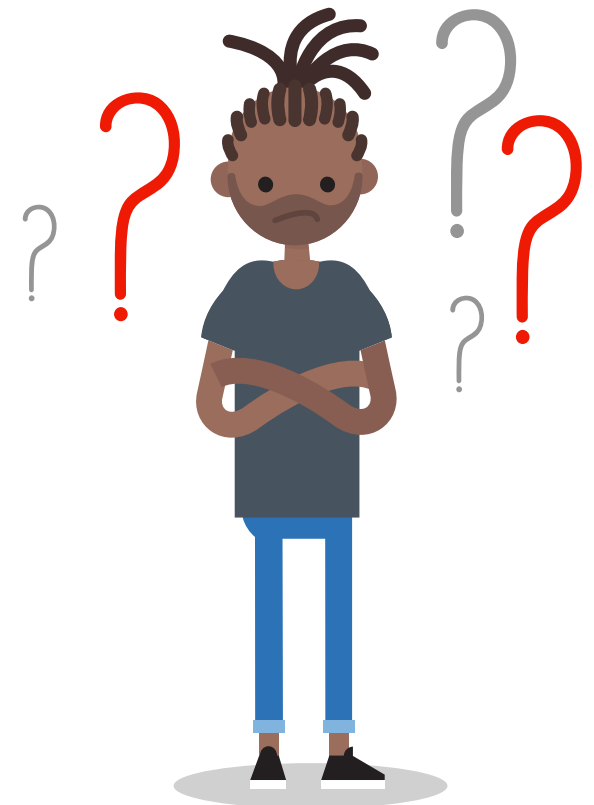
Providing good customer service means repeat business for your garage – happy customers come back again and again. With people owning their cars for longer periods of time the automotive aftermarket is growing – this should mean increased customer lifetime profit for your workshop. Happy customers will also mean referral, bringing further profit to your workshop.

IN SHORT, GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE GENERATES MORE BUSINESS FOR YOU BECAUSE ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

Good customer service also means a stronger brand. For every business, from a single-family operation with one outlet, to the largest international business, your brand is your most valuable asset. It's your public image, your calling card, and your customer service is in integral part of this. A trusted brand is like a constantly positive message beaming out to the world. A damaged brand reduces profitability, a respected brand just grows and grows, adding profit all along the way.

It's all the more important in the new world of social media where complaints and compliments alike are instantly and sometimes permanently visible. In this landscape, your brand is no longer what your ads say; your brand is what your customers say it is. And when they say what it is online, everyone knows about it.

Good customer service means listening to your customers. If you listen to your customers, you will find out what they really want and need. Your customers will tell you exactly what your



next business move should be. They will tell you what they like about what you do, what they don't like, and what they want more of.

You can use this information to refine your proposition. Each tweak you make will give you that edge over your competition. Try asking some of your trusted regulars a few questions next time you're with them. At the very least, you'll make them feel valued. At best, you may hit on a new idea and a new business opportunity.

WHAT KIND OF CUSTOMER SERVICE BOOSTS PROFIT?

In a way, it's easy. It's just about being considerate and thoughtful, taking time to make sure the customer is happy. Be open with your customers, hear what they say, listen and acknowledge. Much frustration with customer service is caused by customers feeling it's a 'them and us' situation, where the seller doesn't really care about their problem or issue. Even simple things like using their names, thanking them for their business and asking what else you can do to help them, make customers feel like you are giving them an all-round, considerate service, not just selling to them. Happy customers will come back for more.

Good customer service is also about efficiency. For example, if the customer has a problem or issue, listening only makes a difference if you subsequently take action that resolves the issue. Whether you are providing a refund, correcting an error, offering a free product or service make the customer aware of his or her options and act on them as soon as possible. Once you've addressed the issue, make sure you follow-up a few days later by calling to check that everything was resolved to the customer's satisfaction.

It's not always possible to give customers everything they demand, but by being flexible and maintaining a helpful attitude you will increase your client loyalty and retention, that's why these things will bring you profitability in the long term.

It hasn't always been quite this way. Before the internet, sales were much more of a numbers game. Customer service has always been as important but achieving more profit was often about selling as many products and services as possible.

Today, customers choose the businesses that they can establish a deeper relationship with and that doesn't look set to change as this state of mind is especially true of younger Millennial customers.

To conclude, providing excellent customer service will give you every opportunity to grow your profits. Here are three practical tips that you can put into practice.

1. Expertise

This can be demonstrated by employing only certified mechanics in your team. A certification, prominently placed in the workshop reception area, tells your customers that your employees are professionals who will get the job done well, on time, and will be able to advise on, and answer queries about, the work if necessary.

2. Dependability

Complete repair work on time and offer a guarantee, customers will have no reason to ever go anywhere else.

3. Honesty

Honesty is key when it comes to winning repeat customers and referrals. Many customers don't know what's really going on under the bonnet – there'll only be more of these as electric vehicles become more common. A lack of knowledge can make these customers worry that they will be 'ripped off' by a garage that will overcharge and claim that unnecessary work must be done in order to sell more services. A supplier you can trust is worth their weight in gold, and if a customer believes you are honest they could stay with you for life, helping to deliver long-term profitability to your garage.

CREATING A CUSTOMER SERVICE CULTURE IN YOUR WORKSHOP

Customer service is a powerful tool that delivers sales, growth, and revenue. To make sure your workshop delivers a consistent customer service culture take a look at our five top tips:


TRAIN YOUR TEAM


CREATE A MANTRA

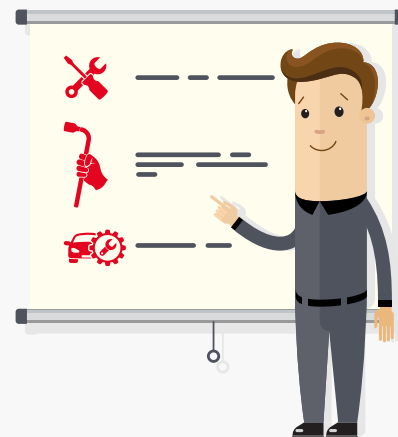

CHOOSE A LEADER


PRAISE GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE


JOIN A REPUTABLE NETWORK

TRAIN YOUR TEAM

Everyone must be aware of how their actions impact the overarching customer service strategy as well as the entire customer experience. You must train ALL your people to understand and follow your customer service culture.



CREATE A MANTRA

Sum up the customer service vision in one line and pin it on the wall for all to see. Make it short and to the point, something that everyone can remember and understand; it will help everyone in your workshop team to deliver great customer service.



CHOOSE A LEADER

Start embedding a customer service culture by appointing customer service champions. Even in a small workshop with just a handful of people, you need to create a leadership team, or even just one leader who champions the customer service culture.



PRAISE GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

Give rewarding feedback to individual employees who have played their part in taking the customer service culture forward, and use these success stories as examples to teach and inspire others.



JOIN A REPUTABLE NETWORK

Make sure your customers know that you deliver great service by joining a reputable garage network and displaying your certification prominently in the reception area.



7 SIGNS OF POOR CUSTOMER SERVICE AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

Good customer service is key to the smooth running of any business or company. As a customer you're more likely to feel satisfied and be more willing to return if the service you received was not only friendly but also efficient and effective. It's easy for good customer service to fall by the way side when pressure is on the business to make money and survive, but your ongoing profitability depends on it. Don't let good customer service slip, you need to keep it consistent to keep customers coming back and keep the business strong.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE TELL-TALE SIGNS OF POOR CUSTOMER SERVICE AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

1. A slow welcome

Possibly the easiest element of customer service to get right is to make sure your staff are welcoming. A slow response to visitors always gets things off to a bad start, not least because your customers' time is probably just as pressured as yours. Vehicles are often brought in for service around the same time that customers are dropping the kids off at school or going to work when time is tight. For the customer, the prospect of not having access to their car for the day is not only stressful but can be a logistical nightmare – that's before they've even thought about cost.

2. A poor welcome

An unfriendly welcome also gets things off to a bad start. A welcoming handshake and a smile can relieve any tension and put the customer at ease. This will not only make the customer easier and faster to deal with but also instils trust

in your service and your company. This is especially important for customers who are relatively new to driving or who have little mechanical knowledge – for them, visiting a garage can be a daunting experience. It's important to put customers at ease and prove you care about their problem, even if it is only small or insignificant. It is important to do this without being patronising.

3. An untidy workshop

A dingy, dirty reception area with used coffee cups and staff scrolling through twitter is never going to inspire confidence. Although you shouldn't judge a book by its cover we are all guilty of making our first impressions based on appearance, so keeping your garage and staff neat and tidy is simple yet crucial to how people regard you and your work. Although you're limited in some respects concerning the physical structure of the building you're working in, there are almost always improvements that can be made. Sometimes something as little as a lick of paint, some comfy chairs and a stack of decent magazines is enough to encourage a customer that this is a credible establishment.

4. Customers kept waiting

If customers are calling in and being told their cars aren't ready this is a sign that either you are overpromising return times, or that you are working inefficiently. Either way, it's a bad sign. Speed is a key part of any service, not only because it means the customer has to waste less time hanging around waiting but also because it means you can fit more customers into a day's work, which will maximise your profit. Don't work so fast that you have to cut corners or so fast that you increase the risk of mistakes. It's important you find the correct balance for you and your company as this can be a huge factor in the customers impression. Ensure your staff are knowledgeable and thorough in order to provide a fast, high quality service.

5. Poor communication

Communication is key in pretty much every aspect of life, but none more so than in the running of a business. This can be communication between staff and management, or between staff and customer. When a customer leaves their car with you, you are responsible for its care. Cars tend to not only be expensive but also important to a customer, so it is important you let the customer know how the work on their car is coming along. This is especially important when carrying out expensive repairs that may take a long period of time to complete. Keeping a customer aware of what is being done, how much it will cost and how much time it will take gives them some peace of mind.

6. Inflexible appointment times

The 21st century world is busy, and everybody is always in a constant rush. This can make getting your car serviced or fixed a real inconvenience. Being flexible and accommodating to people gives a good impression and shows that you're there to help. This can be really helpful for people who work full time and can't pick up their car until after work, or who need their car back at a certain time. This flexibility is attractive to customers and can help improve your reputation.



7. Lack of initiative

An important aspect of good customer service is being thorough. With so many complex parts and different systems all working simultaneously in one car it's likely that there may be more than one thing wrong at one time. It can be frustrating for customers to subsequently find that you have fixed one thing but missed another fault that you could have noticed. Being thorough and running extra checks or tests can be immensely helpful to a customer and may save them a second trip back to you in a few weeks' time. This may also enable you to nip any developing issues in the bud, preventing further hassle to the customer.

CONCLUSION

Despite the preconception, good customer service really isn't as difficult as it sounds. Even just implementing one or two of these ideas could really make a difference to the service you provide and to your customer's experience. This in turn can really help to enhance your business and its reputation as well as boost your profits.

IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE BY DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE IN YOUR WORKSHOP

The less stressed you are, the more time and energy you will naturally put into delivering outstanding customer service.

To tackle stress, an increasing number of small businesses are implementing workplace practices that build emotional resilience. Building resilience into your workshop business will therefore benefit your team, your customers and your bottom line.

Our emotional and physical resilience – sometimes put more simply as ‘inner strength’ – makes us more able to cope with challenging situations both at work and in our personal lives. When times are hard – such as when the economy is in recession, when job security is uncertain, when financial stresses are upon us and when family crises affect us – we experience reduced levels of emotional wellbeing. Coping strategies that help manage our personal stress levels can enhance and improve our emotional resilience.

SLEEP AND SUSTENANCE

You can't underestimate how important a good night's sleep is in making us more resilient; without it physical health suffers, and you need your strength in the workshop environment. A lack of sleep can also cause poor decision-making, which is bad news in a business where customers' safety depends

on the quality of your work. A lack of good quality sleep also decreases your resilience level because it weakens emotional wellbeing and personal confidence.

What you eat is closely aligned with health and performance too – those who want to perform well must also eat well. People who take in good nutrition have a 28% better stress management score, according to a Footprint Forum report. Diet, exercise and sleep are inextricably linked with stress levels, and overwhelming stress can have serious consequences on an individual's ability to cope.

GOOD MANAGEMENT

A workshop manager can play a vital role in helping to prevent ill-health in the team, either physical or emotional, by looking out for early signs of distress or changes in behaviour or performance. This can help the business as well as the team members themselves. A really good workshop manager can prevent loss of working hours through absenteeism and ill-health, as well as the loss of talented garage installers who may otherwise leave the business.

Studies show that employees who work for companies that demonstrate care and concern for employee health and wellbeing are four times more likely to stay with that employer.

BE IN-THE-KNOW

A workshop manager can learn how to manage mental health in the workplace, how to manage stress, and the skills and confidence that this builds can make a huge difference to the individual, the team and the company's reputation and performance.

It doesn't have to mean going on an expensive skills course. Thankfully, any stigma surrounding mental health is rapidly evaporating, and with modern initiatives such as World Mental Health Day the help and advice is out there to read and digest (such as the article you are reading right now). A recent study by Mind suggests that stressed workers can be suffering in silence and that employers should do more to reduce stress. Considering stress remains the number one cause of absence from work, and mental health conditions (including stress anxiety and depression) are the single most widespread cause of long-term absence among both manual and non-manual workers, mental health in the workplace is now a critical priority for employers. Make sure you have the skills to support your team's mental health needs.

MINDFULNESS

Don't underestimate the effect of mindfulness – it could help make you and your team more resilient and regulate stress.

Research in contemplative neuroscience suggests that mindfulness – the practice of focusing your attention on the present moment – makes us more resilient, regulates our stress response, increases emotional intelligence and strengthens our ability to focus.

You can achieve mindfulness by meditating for just a few minutes every day. Meditation apps like Insight Timer or Headspace will tell you what to do.

If meditation isn't for you, maybe just allow yourself some time in your day to allow your mind to roam without constant interruption by emails and social media. Perhaps go for a lunch-time walk to get a bit of fresh air, and if you do, maybe consider going without your phone!

By paying attention to the emotional state of yourself and your colleagues you can maintain a healthy workshop where everyone is best placed to consistently deliver excellent customer service.



FIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS THAT EVERY MECHANIC NEEDS



PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge of how the products that you fit work within with a vehicle will deliver peace of mind.



PATIENCE

Customers need to feel that they are being heard, so spend time listening to them.



USE POSITIVE LANGUAGE

Use good customer service skills, say what you can do instead of what you can't.



BE A 'ROCK'

Show that the business has the ability to stay calm and solve any problem.



SHOW YOU CARE

End your interaction with the customer by confirming that they are satisfied.

EXAMPLES OF GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE

When you experience great customer service, you never forget it. Some examples of customer service are so great that they've become memorable to people who didn't experience them, only heard about them. Here are some of our favourite stories of great customer service. They're not from workshop businesses but they show just how powerful good customer service can be, and they may get you thinking of similar ideas that you can put in to practice yourself.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Author and business consultant Peter Shankman was getting ready to board a 2½ hour flight after already undergoing a long day's travel. To express his frustration, he moaned on Twitter that he would be starving by the time he landed and jokingly tweeted the well-known restaurant chain Morton's Porterhouse, saying: "Hey, @Mortons – can you meet me at Newark airport with a porterhouse when I land in two hours? K, thanks. :)".

At the airport, Shankman was greeted by a guy in a tuxedo who presented him with a 24 oz. Porterhouse steak, an order of Colossal shrimp, a side of potatoes, bread, two napkins and silverware, all ready to take away in a Morton's Porterhouse bag.

Somehow, the nearest branch of Morton's Porterhouse tracked down Mr Shankman's flight information, worked out where he was landing, cooked the food and then drove 23.5 miles to deliver it. The incident became a legend on Twitter, and so did Morton's Porterhouse.

CREATIVE GENIUS

Sometimes even a brand renowned for its impeccable customer service can go up a gear, and that's just what the Ritz-Carlton did with the help of the now famous soft toy Joshie the giraffe.

On returning home from a holiday at the Ritz-Carlton on Amelia Island in Florida, customer Chris Hurn's distressed son informed his father that he had accidentally left his beloved soft toy Joshie the giraffe behind in their hotel room. Responding with a creative solution to the problem, Dad assured his son that Joshie was just staying on for an extra few days' holiday in Florida and would be home soon.

Mr Hurn called the Ritz-Carlton to see if Joshie had been found, which he had, and asked the hotel to send him on. During the conversation, Mr Hurn also happened to mention Joshie's imaginary 'holiday'.

The Ritz-Carlton then made Mr Hurn's creative solution a reality. Before sending Joshie back, the hotel staff captured

Joshie enjoying his extended vacation with a series of holiday snaps. This included pictures of him relaxing by the pool, enjoying a massage at the spa and going for a round of golf. The story was circulated heavily both on social media and traditional media and has since become a legendary tale of great customer service.

BEING GENUINELY HELPFUL WHEN IT MATTERS

A customer of glasses manufacturer Warby Parker once received what he described as, "possibly the very best customer service of all time." Having accidentally left his beloved Warby Parker reading glasses on a train, Michael John Mathis ordered himself another identical pair the following day. However, when the package arrived he received not one but two pairs of those same reading glasses, plus a copy of the classic travel novel *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac and this note:

"Hi Michael, This might be odd... but you sat across from me on the train ride from NYC to Boston a few weeks ago and

left your glasses on the train! As luck would have it, I happen to be the GC of Warby Parker, and there is nothing I like more than a good mystery... I hope these find you in good health! (also, we noticed your lenses were scratched so we made you a fresh pair!).

TRUE CARE AND CONSIDERATION

This is a sad and touching story, but perhaps the most powerful one of all. Grandfather Mark Dickinson was heading to Denver to see his grandson, who was in a coma and was not expected to live another 24 hours. Having managed to book a last-minute flight by explaining his situation, Mr Dickinson was then delayed by traffic and ended up arriving at the departure gate 12 minutes after his Southwest Airlines flight was due to leave. He was met at the gate by the pilot, who said: "They can't go anywhere without me, and I wasn't going anywhere without you. Now relax. We'll get you there."

Offering good customer service is often something people talk about but don't actually do anything about. Many talk of 'going the extra mile' for customers but do they really? All this shows what a massive difference great customer service can make if you really do give it.

Whenever you can, take the opportunity to deliver a truly thoughtful and memorable piece of customer service. You'll win lasting loyalty from the customer who benefits, and like the stories you've read here, you may well find that your customer service story spreads and wins you many more customers. Good news travels fast, so they say, and that's never been truer since social

media became a part of our everyday lives, so get a great customer service story out there and yours will be the name on everybody's lips.



10 TIPS FOR CREATING CUSTOMER LOYALTY AND REPEAT CUSTOMERS

“Two-thirds of consumers (68%) are willing to pay up to 15% more for the same product or service if they are assured they will have a better experience.” – Podium

Time and time again, surveys and statistics show that great customer service is a huge benefit not just to the customer but also to the business.

HERE'S TEN WAYS THAT YOU CAN MAKE SURE YOUR WORKSHOP DELIVERS A BETTER EXPERIENCE:

1. Wash and vacuum

One addition to the workshop service that makes a hugely positive impact is to make sure all cars are washed, vacuumed, and ready to go, so the customer drives away in a vehicle that not only has been refreshed under the bonnet but looks and feels refreshed too. The customer will subconsciously feel that if the car has been well cleaned it will also have been well repaired, and the fresh smell that lingers in the vehicle days after the service is a constant reminder of your good work. A wash and vac is also a practical benefit for a customer because it saves them time.

2. Nothing's too much trouble

Customers can be frustrated if repairs take longer than they were told, so it's important not to overpromise. Better to under promise and over deliver. But even if things do take longer than

expected you can turn this to your advantage. For example, if the customer is waiting with you, you could offer to take them home and then drop the car off for them later in the day, which will save your customer a lot of inconvenience and leave them with a very positive feeling about your workshop.

3. Be open, honest and clear

Customers trust and appreciate you more when you explain, both before and after the repair, what's wrong with their vehicle, and you can reassure them further by showing them any broken parts that have been replaced. This will reassure the customer that the work you have done has been necessary and made their car safer – it also shows respect for the customer because you have credited them with some understanding. Some customers find garages intimidating and fear that they will be overcharged because they don't understand cars as well as the garage does. Even if these customers don't understand your explanation they will appreciate and trust you for offering it. And there's a further benefit here. Other customers who come and go from your reception area will overhear the explanations you give and feel reassured that you are committed to offering good, honest advice with a desire to solve any problems at the least possible cost to the customer.

4. Be scrupulous on price

If you are scrupulously fair on the quote this can pay you serious dividends. To ensure they are getting good value, customers will often compare estimates from two or more garages. Customers may therefore be coming to you having already been overcharged by another garage. A genuine and honest assessment from you may arrive at a price that is good for you and will seriously undercut the competition. By offering a fair quote, you may gain a customer who brings their friends and family to you too – far more profitable in the long term than charging the maximum fee for one job.

5. Undercut yourself

Another thing that impresses customers no end is when the price is less than that quoted. If, on completion of the job, you find that you have quoted a price that is genuinely over the cost you needed to charge for the job, charge the customer that reduced price. Few gestures can reassure and please a customer more than being billed less than they expected.



6. Be available

Some workshops are available for pick up and drop off of vehicles seven days a week, which customers love. Not all businesses can manage this, but if you can be available early and/or late it can give you a competitive edge.

7. Guarantee your work

Make sure that all the work and parts you offer are guaranteed for at least one year. This is a service that most reputable garages offer and you should offer it too if you want to compete in today's aftermarket.

8. Try to pick a quiet time

If you have a customer with a more complicated problem, try to suggest they come in at a quieter time – late morning or early afternoon – rather than first thing when cars are being dropped off, or early evening when they're being picked up. If there's a specific problem that your customer wants you to look at, make sure you allow extra time. Overruns or unscheduled work can cause chaos with congested workshop schedules.

9. Get things straight from the start

It's your job to know about cars, not your customer's, so you must help them to explain clearly and precisely what they want you to do. It can help to write it down, particularly if they need a lot of work done or the symptoms are hard to describe. This will avoid any misunderstandings later that may annoy your customer. Get as many details as you can from the owner. For example, a small detail such as, "I only hear the noise when the car is in reverse," can make a big difference to fault diagnosis. Vague, intermittent faults can be hard to trace and searching for them can cause your mechanics to fall

behind schedule so ask customers to help you by providing all the information they can.

10. Offer a fully itemised invoice

A fully itemised invoice, detailing everything done to the car, how long it took and how much the parts cost will give your customer great peace of mind, show that you are a very organised business, and may avoid any quibbles on cost.

All of the services above will inspire loyalty and trust in your customers and, as we said at the start, people are ready and willing to choose a workshop that can deliver a more satisfying customer experience. Put into practice as many extra customer service touches as you can and you will win and keep more customers.

THANK YOU FOR READING

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We hope you've found ideas that help you solve problems, enhance your customer service and keep your business strong. Keep visiting the **ORIGINAL WORKSHOPS** hub for more helpful tips and advice about workshop topics such as digital marketing, sourcing parts and business success.