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**How Does Your Service Customer Measure Value?**

By Reynolds Consulting Services

Value is a small word with incredible impact in the automotive dealership service world. Even so, it's often mismanaged, overlooked, and can result in a less-than-impressive customer experience.

Think about it. From the moment a customer arrives on your service drive, **your dealership is building a case either for or against a worthwhile experience.**

So how do you communicate value? The best way is through actively engaging the customer, understanding who they are and why they have come to your dealership. **Consider the following questions when evaluating the way your dealership handles customers at every step of the service process:**

**Greet**

- How are your service advisors or employees greeting customers?
- Do service employees who wait on customers know them by name?
- Do service employees know why each customer is on the drive?
- Do service employees acquire customers' proper contact information before they leave the store?

**Write-up**

- Do service employees ask the right questions to identify the problem?
- Do service employees use effective listening skills?
- During write-up, do service employees identify other potentially needed services for the current service visit?

**Repair**

- Do service employees maintain customer contact throughout the day if the vehicle has been dropped off?
- Do service employees thoroughly explain, with confidence and assurance, the additional needed maintenance when making the upsell call?
- Do service employees ensure the customer is picked up on time by your store's service shuttle?

**Follow-up**

- Do service employees follow up on every customer post-service visit to make sure the visit went well and answer additional questions?
- Do service employees ask the customer if they would like a next service visit reminder?

Do these things happen on every write up, every day? If they don't, the customer's perception of value can drop immeasurably!

Notice that we're not discussing the price of the service. **Focus on building value instead.** If the customer feels important and cared for throughout the process, price is rarely the obstacle. Customers will be happy to spend their money with your store because you gave them value!

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# Fuel Results

With Tips from Reynolds Consulting

Volume 3 | 2010

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## How Many Messages to Leave?

By John Carpenter



Dealers I've worked with around the country often ask the same question about calling customers: "How many messages should I leave? What do I say after leaving multiple messages?" The answer lies in the type of outbound phone call you are making and the desired outcome of that phone call. I can offer some guiding thoughts based on best practices in relation to these two types of calls and their desired outcomes for your dealership.

### 1. Sales or Service CSI Calls Are For:

- Building your relationship with customers.
- Making sure expectations are met to ensure a good survey.

#### Recommendation:

Make one attempt per available phone number per day. When calling the final customer contact number, leave a detailed message. In this message explain the intent of the call, mention you attempted to reach them at their other contact numbers, and thank them for their business. This customer has already purchased from you, so there is no need to pursue beyond this point.

### 2. Unsold Follow-up Calls Are Seeking:

- Actual contact with the customer.
- To gather critical information not known at this point.
- To set an appointment.

#### Recommendation:

A more aggressive call, this often requires multiple attempts on multiple days. The goal is to get the customer to see the need to return your phone call. An easy way to dramatically increase your callback percentage is by simply leaving the message you wish to convey and politely ending the phone message with, "By the way, if I don't hear from you by tonight, I will call you back tomorrow."

Changing the time frames is acceptable as needed. This lets the customer know what you want them to do and what the next step will be if you don't hear back from them. Many return phone callers will let you know they are no longer interested; however, wouldn't you rather concentrate your valuable time and effort on people who may be interested?

There are few times when you should not leave a message. You do not have to feel uneasy about leaving a message that clearly and politely states the purpose for the call and your desired action from the customer. The biggest error is failing to give proper instruction to the customer as to what you want them to do and why.

Overall, clear communication is key when leaving phone messages for customers. Your targeted efforts will result in more callbacks to your dealership and help you achieve your desired goal with each phone call contact.

*John has worked 20 years in the automotive industry, focusing on the variable operations side of the business. He has extensive experience in consulting, training, and process improvements for business development centers, lead management, direct marketing, eBusiness marketing, sales and sales management, and lease portfolio and renewal efforts.*

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## The Fuel for Relevance

By Matt Davenport



Each year early in the spring, I crew the "12 Hours of Sebring" car race in Florida. It's America's longest-running sports car race in Florida. I love spring and the smell of first-cut grass and first-blooming flowers and of course, for a gear head, the first smell of scorching brakes and race fuel.

I was interested this year to note how the American LeMans Series (ALMS) has converted all competition vehicles to alternative fuels. Exotic cars like production-derived Ferraris, Corvettes, BMWs, Audis, Peugeots, Porsches, Aston Martins, Acuras, and more now run on something other than traditional gasoline. Fuels used include E10 Ethanol, E85 gas/Ethanol, GTL (natural gas to liquid) biodiesel, E10 electric hybrids, and now even an isobutanol/ethanol blend.

The significance to me is not the engineering properties of the fuels, but the alternative approach the Series, manufacturers, and teams are taking to stay relevant in the world of seemingly discretionary spending on race programs. The argument is that if the cars and fuels can perform in severe-duty conditions like the crucible of a 12-hour all-out race, they can certainly perform in daily driving. Thus, the race, cars, programs, fuels, and transferrable learning all become relevant to the companies and consumer markets they serve; hence the financial justification.

The challenge of staying relevant is the same challenge dealers face today in an automotive world loaded with technology tools and options for their use. The struggle is not in getting the tools to work - but rather to use them effectively in the dealership to remain relevant in the eyes of your customers and prospects and solidly profitable to keep you in business.

Like the ALMS and its teams, there's no set prescription for how to make key parts of all these tools relevant to users. There's a variety of approaches based on what each manufacturer and your dealership are trying to accomplish. You also have unique business challenges based on your location, consumer demographics, employees, and more.

The key to solving these challenges is twofold. First, prioritize what problems you're facing and second, be willing to apply the relevant technologies and processes to solve for them.

OEMs, teams, and fuel companies partner together to stay relevant in the ALMS. You can do the same by partnering with your OEM and Reynolds Consulting Services to prioritize what you're trying to accomplish and select and use the right "fuel" for your business challenges. That "fuel" might be a process improvement initiative, establishing a new process, re-setting job performance standards, coaching management performance, or even re-visioning where you're taking your business. Having served the automotive retail market for over 20 years, Reynolds Consulting Services can help you do all of these and "Fuel Results" - hence the name of our publication. If you think you could benefit from a high performance fuel additive, or even an alternative fuel, please get a hold of us. We'd love to work with you!

*Matt Davenport is the director of Practice Development and Customer Care Services for Reynolds Consulting Services and has worked for Reynolds and Reynolds for over 16 years.*

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