



Other resources in step 4h:

Template: Customer Service Self Assessment form

How does your customer service rate? – time for self-assessment

Restaurants are very much like automotive workshops in that both have a very distinct front office where the customer is serviced and a back office where the work is done.

A restaurant can have a great waiter who provides exceptional service but if the chef serves up a rubbish meal then the customer most likely won't return. Similarly, if the waiter is surly or messes up the order, but the chef presents a mouth-watering meal, the customer is also unlikely to return.

The same challenge is faced by workshops every day. You can be the best mechanic in the country but if the job out front is only half done the customer will most likely be dissatisfied with the service and won't return.

Where restaurants and workshops are very different is in the attitude of their customers. Most people go to restaurant to socialise and enjoy a meal, meaning they are usually in a good mood. This makes life a little easier for the waiter.

Those who walk into a workshop are more often than not in a bad mood because their vehicle has a problem, and they know they are going to be spending money they don't want to spend on something they know very little about. To make matters worse, they will most likely now be inconvenienced because they won't have a car.

What this all means is that a workshop's customer service must be exceptional to win them over and get them back again. If it's just OK, they will most likely only return if the price is low, or they don't have a better option.

Most workshops think they provide great service by bending over backwards to get things done at the drop of hat and charging less time than it took.

That is not a good strategy. Here's a checklist of some incredibly simple things that many workshops do to really annoy potential customers:

- When answering the phone, the workshop employee fails to introduce themselves or even the business name.
- Responses to customer enquiries received via email or Facebook take days.
- Not informing the customer when their vehicle might be ready for pick-up, or even when the workshop intends to look at it.
- Not keeping the customer informed throughout the day on how the job is going, and whether more diagnostic investigation is needed.
- Extra services such as new wiper blades or a fuel treatment are done on a customer's car without their approval.
- The final cost of the repair or service is greater than the customer was expecting, or that was originally estimated or discussed.
- It is left to the customer to call the workshop for information about the progress on the repair or service, and an estimate of when the car might be ready for pick-up.
- The customer is told the car will be ready at a certain time, but when they arrive, the car is still in the workshop and the invoice is nowhere near ready.

A recent TaT Biz survey revealed that close to 50 per cent of workshops called didn't even make it past the first point above.

Available for download from www.tat.net.au/resources is a customer service self-assessment check list. Take the time to work through it and honestly evaluate your business. Better still ask a friend who is also a customer to assess you. See how your workshop might score when the boss is away in holidays. Are you sure that your staff will follow your customer service processes?

In this era of an ever changing automotive repair industry, there's plenty of competition, most of it coming from new car dealerships that are gradually moving towards allowing all makes of cars into their workshops and are introducing some attractive incentives to win customers.

If independent aftermarket want a piece of the pie, they will need get their customer service up to scratch. Self-assessing your customer service is just the beginning.

The place to start is www.tatbiz.net.au/resources.

Just go for it!