

PROFIT MOTIVE: YOUR COMPASS TO FINANCIAL SUCCESS

Adding a sales rep to your team

Turn your estimators, repair planners into advocates for your shop and service

BY TOM MCGEE | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

I conduct several shop owner events across the country every month. When I ask, “How many of you have a sales representative on your staff?” almost none raise their hand. In fact, they all do! By definition, a sales representative is a person employed to represent a business and to sell its merchandise.

We use titles such as repair planner or estimator for the person who creates and presents an estimate to the vehicle owner. With continuous change in systems, vehicle construction materials and new vehicle technology, this is a challenging position that requires expertise in many areas. In many shops, we tend to overlook that one of the estimator’s major responsibilities is to sell.

Typical sales process

Every day, vehicle owners come into a shop and need an estimate. So “Bob” will disappear outside to look at the car, enter the visible damage into the computer and hand over the estimate. Bob will commonly say, “Call your insurance company and find out what they want to do,” or “Call when you decide if you want your vehicle repaired.” Bob never even asks for the keys!

A typical process you would find in any sales environment would have several stages. For example:

Lead. A lead is any person or business that needs your services. Leads are generated through your marketing efforts — handing someone a business card, contacts made at a community event, a visit to your website or social media pages, or through a referral. An opportunity is created anytime

a vehicle owner calls or walks into the shop asking about a service that you offer.

Discovery. This is a time for the estimator to gather information on contact numbers, insurance company, accident details, frequency and type of communication the customer would prefer (phone, email, text, etc.), and how they selected your shop. Discover what their needs are, show empathy and build a relationship and trust with the vehicle owner. Ask open-ended questions such as, “When is the best time to have the vehicle repaired?” or “Can you bring the vehicle in Thursday morning?” These types of questions give you insight into your potential for closing the sale.

Presentation. Explain the benefits of selecting your shop — prepare a 30-second speech that shows you care about the customers, why other customers prefer your shop and the benefits they gain by allowing you to repair their vehicle. This is also a great time to get the commitment from the owner that they will allow you to repair their vehicle so that you can do a complete teardown before generating an estimate. If you present an initial estimate in this phase, explain it in terms they will understand.

Close. This can be the hardest part for estimators, most of whom have little to no sales training. The close is asking for the sale. Some customers will want an initial estimate; but if you can get the sale before you write the estimate, you will be that much more efficient in the repair process. If you have to write one, try to get a confirmation that you will be getting the sale before you write the estimate.

Overcome objections. Listen closely to everything the vehicle owner is saying. Listen to the objection, then formulate your response and educate the vehicle owner.

Communication. If you didn’t close the sale, you need a process to follow up, either to schedule the repair or to find out why they did not select your shop. During the repair process, communicate with the customer at the frequency they prefer and use their preferred method. If there are delays, inform them. At delivery, go over the vehicle and review the final invoice. Also follow up after delivery to make sure they are satisfied with the repair and service.

Measure your opportunities

Measure all sales opportunities and closed sales. If you don’t measure it, you don’t know how you are doing. Measure by estimator and as a business.

We have created a great interactive tool to help you calculate the additional revenue you can gain by focusing on your close ratio. Try it free for a limited time by going to www.atonlinetraining.com/abrn1407. It also makes a great tool for training and coaching your staff on how the work they do makes a difference to the business. ☺

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