



In the movie about his life, when door-to-door salesman Bill Porter was told by his boss that the phone sales people were generating more business than he, he responded very succinctly, "They're taking orders; they aren't selling."

Stop, evaluate yourself, and be honest: are you just taking orders? There is a reason we ask the question "Are you a Service Writer?". An Advisor advises customers of the vehicle's requirements with an eye on the customer's own needs; a writer just takes what comes in the door.

Are you a Service Writer?

<p>Service Writer or "Order Taker"</p>  <p>"Order Takers"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writes down what the customer says but does not inform the customer of needed additional service• "Customer Jumper" – quickly dispatches with customers so they can move on to the next• Volume not service is their motto• Writes "one line" repair orders• Focuses on doing the minimum required	<p>Service Advisor or Consultant</p>  <p>Consultants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listens to what the customer says and uses that information to recommend needed services• Takes their time with each customer to be sure they give them enough attention and service• Knows that it is easier to keep a current customer than it is to gain a new one• Writes detailed repair orders that help technicians address the vehicle's issues properly the first time• Focuses on long-term customer retention
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Regardless of how you answered, you do not have to be content just taking orders. Today is a new day and we can start right now to be a different kind of service professional.

The best way to evolve from the order taker mentality to a true service advisor is to have a thorough understanding of your products and services offered. The order taker waits for the customer to specify the services that they are looking for. The service advisor makes suggestions as to what services would most closely fit the needs of the customer. If they have a menu sheet or other literature, they will get them out and will get the customer engaged with the offerings.

While an order taker may know a few of the answers to the questions the customer may pose, the professional advisor has researched what they consider to be the potential and important questions that the customer might ask and is prepared either with an answer to the question or a ready reference to locate that answer. For instance, what do we have available for alternative transportation, when will the car be done, what is the vehicle's history, why it's a good thing to do a complete maintenance versus an LOF, and a laundry list of other things that might be raised during the write-up process.

So how do you get good at learning all the questions and concerns a customer might raise? Answer - practice and observation.

Role-playing with other advisors is a great method for rookie advisors to get a feel for everything a customer can throw at you. But in the busy dealership, I can understand how that might not always be practical. You can also try to pay attention to the other advisor's discussions during write-up. Are you hearing the questions the customers are asking? Would you have an answer for them? Are some questions tougher than others?

With the tough questions, write them down and do the research. For instance, why should someone flush their vehicle's antifreeze other than a book tells us to. (Hint: part of the answer should always be to remind the customer that a cooling system failure is the number one reason for engine breakdowns and that the engine can literally generate enough heat to destroy itself.) Write down these difficult questions, along with the answers, and keep them on index cards. The more you know about the service options you can offer a customer, the more you will be on the way to being a service advisor instead of a service writer. In fact as you progress you should actually be insulted when someone refers to you as a service writer.

The customer image of a dealership is largely the result of contact with the service advisor. That's because the service advisor has personal contact with at least 12 customers per day (10 customer-paid ROs and two warranty ROs) and 240 per month.

Sales guys may contact 20-30 customers and prospects per month. Therefore, when compared with customer contact, one service advisor equals 10 new/used sales people. Bar none, he is the largest influence on the public's image of your dealership.

What customers want:

Customers want empathy, energy, efficiency, expertise, and ethics. The standards for a professional service advisor include product and warranty knowledge, problem analysis and identification, communication skills, and estimating skills.

Because women tend to listen better than men, they make good service advisors.

Below I've outlined the qualities of a good-listener. Among them:

Let the other person finish speaking

Insulate against distractions

Show interest

Exhibit positive body language

Take responsibility

Focus on the message

Exercise emotional control

Take notes

Never assume you understand — ask questions

Give feedback — paraphrase and summarize.

BE A PROFESSIONAL!

Seven deadly sins

I can't emphasize enough how important it is to treat the customer right. When a company loses a customer, 68% of the time, it is because employees showed an attitude of indifference. By contrast, customers stop doing business with a company for lower prices only 10% of the time.

Why do customers leave? The answer may be found in the list of the seven sins of customer disservice:

Apathy

Brush-off

Coldness

Condescension

Robotism

Adhering strictly by the rule book

Giving customers the runaround.

Service departments should have specific customer-handling policies and procedures. These policies and procedures should eliminate barriers between the dealership and customer. ADC suggests spending five to eight uninterrupted minutes with each customer. Listen; write the repair order properly. Follow up progress of each RO and actively re-deliver the vehicle when completed.

