

A Dash Light Dilemma – What’s Your Shop’s Philosophy?

By: John Daulton



I overheard an interesting conversation about a dash light the other day. A shop owner had a customer with a dash light on. The customer had come in for something else, brake noise, I believe, and as the customer was picking up the car and paying his bill, he asked the shop owner, “Hey, did you guys notice that light on my dash?”

“Yes,” said the shop owner. “We saw it. We ran the code, and it came up a camshaft sensor. I wouldn’t worry about it.”

• The customer, relieved, paid for his brake service and left. This left me wondering though. Was this a good deed from this shop owner? Was it a generous act, or was it something else, maybe a missed opportunity or even a mistake?

• The more I mulled it over, the more curious it became. On one hand, the shop owner clearly had no intention of selling that customer anything he didn’t feel was necessary. In the shop owner’s opinion, and based upon his experience, that sensor was a minor issue, at least in the specific case of

• this customer and vehicle.

• On the other hand, I thought, it seemed like that could be a minor but reckless business move. If the **purpose** of an automotive repair facility is to keep cars and trucks running like they did when they were new, then this was a lost opportunity.

• Now I admit, I do not have the authority (or the desire) to dictate or define what “the purpose” of an auto repair facility is, at least not in any kind of big-picture way. And I do know that it ultimately comes down

to individuals and personalities—my twenty-five years in this industry has proven that to be the case. However, in this instance, this example with the cam sensor, couldn't it be said that he would have been perfectly honest in recommending that repair be done?

The shop owner could have said, "Well, sir, that light is because of your camshaft sensor. Your vehicle appears to be running properly, but a problem could be beginning, or the sensor itself may be malfunctioning." From there he could have quoted a more detailed diagnostic, the price of replacement, or whatever course is best (I am not a technician, so I won't try to guess). But my point is, I couldn't help but wonder why he didn't recommend it, even though I know he did what he believed was right.

So what is right? Is there even such a thing as "right" in that instance? Certainly, recommending a service you don't feel the customer needs is wrong. But isn't there some value in giving the customer the option to have his vehicle working exactly as it was when it was new? When the man bought it brand-new, there were no dash lights on, so to suggest fixing the problem that triggered the light could not be considered wrong or aggressive sales, could it?

I don't have the answer. I do know that we work with lots of shops who do battle with competition on every corner. For some shops, letting any single dollar of revenue escape can mean the difference between paying themselves that month or not. For some of them, perhaps for people like the owner of

this particular shop, the difference between "over-selling" and providing good service is simply a matter of attitude. But then, where do you draw the line. Where do **YOU** draw the line? How do you know? What advice would you give?

The reason I ask is simple. One of the services we provide is the ability to send reminders to customers who had additional work they could have had done during a particular visit but didn't get done at the time (technician recommended services), so clearly this relates. That said, I'm going to post this article on our blog in addition to printing it here in this newsletter. I hope you'll stop by and leave your opinion.

www.customerlink.com/blog

5 EASY Things YOU Can Do to Get More Facebook Likes

By John Daulton

From time to time, we get shop owners asking how they can get more people to "like" their Facebook pages. So, I thought I'd take a moment to give some of the very basic strategies, things that any shop can do, but that many aren't doing yet. Think of these as the low-hanging fruit of Facebook strategies.

1: ASK THEM!

This is the easiest one. Just ask your customers to like your shop on Facebook when they get home. Heck, if they have a smartphone with them (which they most likely will), they might just do it right there on the spot. So just ask. Say, "Hey, Mr. Jones, don't forget to like us on Facebook." How easy is that? Besides being fast, easy and cheap, it works!

2: GIVE THEM A SIGN

Literally. Give them a sign. Put one on your

counter. Put one in your front window. Put another one in your waiting room. It doesn't have to be fancy. Something as simple as "Please, LIKE us on Facebook" in big letters will work. Below that, put the URL for your shop's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ABCauto), and maybe include the name of your shop as it appears on Facebook just in case your customer doesn't know your shop's full name. If you have a QR code for your shop's URL, put that on there too. If you don't know what a QR code is, read number three below.

3: GET A "QR" CODE!

A QR code is basically a bar code, just like every other bar code you've ever seen on every product you've purchased over the last thirty years, except these are scrambled into squares or other shapes instead of the neat row of thin and thicker lines. The big difference is that these send people to your website or Facebook page, depending on how you set them up. Setting them up is easy, and if you type the term "QR Generator" into Google, you will see that getting one is fast, easy, and free from lots of different sources. Get one, put it on your counter sign (number two above), put it on the back of your business cards, or even put it on your CustomerLink smrt™ service

reminder postcards—although you might consider using your shop's website rather than a Facebook page for that. Either way, it's totally up to you.

4: PUT A "LIKE US ON FACEBOOK" BUTTON ON YOUR WEBSITE!

Doing this is very simple. Facebook has a code generator that creates the code necessary to do it (it's so easy that I was able to do it on my personal website, and I am NOT a web developer by any stretch of the imagination). If you have someone who does your website for you, they will know exactly what I am talking about, and you can get them to do it for you in no time at all (assuming they are readily available, etc.).

5: PUT A LINK TO YOUR FACEBOOK PAGE IN YOUR EMAIL SIGNATURE

This is another really easy one to do. Go into the "signature" section of whatever system you use for sending and receiving email and add a link to your Facebook page. Whether you just slap the URL down at the bottom or actually make hyperlinked text that says "Like us on Facebook," you will have implemented a quick and simple technique that will help you get Facebook likes for free.

What Are BETTER Customers and How Do I Get Some?

Imagine if you could look at a map of the area around your business and know which households would spend more money at your shop than your average customers do if you could only just get them to come in. Imagine if you could tell which of them were the most likely to be loyal and come in more regularly year after year.

Well, you don't have to imagine. That technology is real, and we have it. We can find those people for you, and it's that kind of customer we are talking about when we say you can get "better" customers.

Better customers are customers who spend more than your average customers do as determined by real data taken from your shop's database. And beyond simply better, we go after the best of them, the customers proven to spend the most. They spend more per visit, and they come in more times during the year. Getting a steady stream of people who do that and then making sure to do the things that keep them coming back is the way to profit and increased opportunity for you and your business.

We help you find those people, we help you get them to your shop, and then we help you keep them coming back over and over again. Here's how we do it:

In your shop's database, you have a pool of information about your current customers. With most shop management software, that information includes dates of service visits, services purchased, how much was spent on those services, and lots of personal information like address, phone number and, if you have been diligent, email addresses.

So, with that information, we can tell which of your customers come in more times per year than others, and which of them spend more per visit while they

are there. When we take those two sets of information and combine them, we can determine what "average" looks like for your shop. Once we know what your shop's average consumer looks like, you can then see which are better by comparison.

Now, as you hopefully know by now, we have consumer data (our smrt program) that we use to group people into what we call "Consumer Segments." This is essentially consumer profiling, and pretty much everyone in the country falls into one of seventy of these segments.

Your best customers fall into consumer segments. We know which segments they are.

So, if you decide you want to get some new customers, we can help you target ONLY the consumer segment or segments that represent the kind of people who spend the most and come in more often than any other group does. Because we have consumer profiling for just about everyone in the U.S., when you decide to go after new customers, we simply compare your best customer segments to the map of the area around your business. Since we've already got your data, we know who on the map has already been to your shop, and we can determine who, from the high-spending segment, has never been to your shop before. BAM, you have a list of perfect candidates to send your marketing message to.

This program is what we call "New Customer Finder" or NCF for short, and it helps you start bringing in a steady stream of super-high-value customers. You don't need a mob of people crowding your front door every day wagging \$5-off oil change coupons. What you need is a consistent, manageable stream of people who will bring long-term stability to your business. Call your Account Manager to find out more.

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We're trying to determine the reach of our newsletters to our clients. All we ask you to do is clip out this section of the newsletter, fill out the shop info, and send it back; or, log in to the website listed below (or scan the QR code with your smartphone), and fill out the form there to enter online.

When we receive yours, we'll put you in a drawing to win one month of service FREE (prize for one shop location only, and one standard service bundle or equivalent; total prize value not to exceed \$499). The winner will be chosen the first week of March, 2012. Thank you in advance.

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Contact Name: _____

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