

The secret to successful selling at your shop

Become a masterful listener to gain a competitive edge

Selling at the front counter can be extremely difficult when customers are in a hurry and frustrated with even having to bring their car into your shop. I was listening to veteran coach Eric Twigg explain what many a great service writer can forget: the real secret to successful selling. Here is what he had to say:

My interviewer threw me a curveball! I had just graduated from college and was interviewing for an outside sales position with a copy machine company.

"Sell me this pen!" the interviewer demanded, as he slammed the pen on his desk in front of us. I responded by creating an imaginary list of all the features the pen had to offer. I felt good about my selling performance and was looking forward to getting a call back, but I never did. Where did I go wrong?

Several months later, after reading Jeffrey Gitomer's book, "The Sales Bible," I realized where I went wrong. Gitomer wrote the following: "Listening is the first commandment of selling." And then it hit me. I had nothing to listen to, be-

cause I never asked the interviewer any questions related to his need for a pen! I was so focused on talking that I forgot about listening.

Has this happened to you? Well, you aren't alone. Consider the following research findings of Dr. Ralph Nichols, a pioneer in the field of listening: "While participating in a conversation, the average person forgets 50 percent of what the other person is saying immediately after they finish speaking."

Think about your own life for a moment. How many people can you name who actively listen without interrupting, and give you their undivided attention while you are speaking? For most people, it's a short list.

Since the failure to listen is such a prevalent problem, becoming a masterful listener can give you a competitive edge. Stay with me to learn two specific ways that you can benefit from becoming a better listener.

Listening builds trust

Imagine taking your car to a shop and

you tell the writer that you have a 2010 Ford Fusion. As he is writing you up he asks you, "What kind of car was that?" Later, you instruct him to replace the two rear tires, only to find that he has the two front tires circled on the work order!

You ask him to call your cell with updates and later have three messages on your home answering machine letting you know that the job won't be done today as promised. How much trust would you have in this shop?

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How can the customer trust you to be their mechanic when they can't trust you to remember what they told you about their vehicle? To build higher levels of trust I recommend that you embrace the habits of note taking and restating.

When a customer calls, you can use your phone log to write down the necessary details of the conversation. When they are at your location, use a note pad to write down what they are saying.

After a customer has told you about a specific problem, review your notes and restate the problem back, to confirm that you were listening. Embracing these habits can make you their shop of choice because you will have established the right level of trust.

Listening builds connection

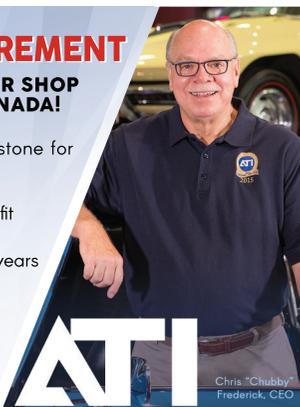
The story is told of a young woman who

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had the opportunity to dine with two political rivals who were running for the office of prime minister: William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli.

She later compared her encounters. What she reported confirms the value of being a great listener.

“When I left after sitting next to Mr. Gladstone, I felt like he was the most interesting man in the world. After sitting next to Mr. Disraeli, I felt like I was the most interesting woman in the world!”

Disraeli won the election by a landslide because of his ability to listen and connect. He allowed her to talk about her favorite subject.

Your customers and the young lady have the same favorite subject: themselves! This is why going out to the vehicle with the customer is such a critical step. You get the opportunity to listen as they talk about themselves. Asking the right questions is the starting point of the listening process.

For example, after asking how long a customer plans to keep the car, you get to listen as they tell you about how well they maintain it. After asking about the toddler car seat in the back, you get to listen as they tell you about how well their little son is doing in soccer.

When a customer feels like they are the most interesting customer in the world, they will vote for you as their shop of choice! Your ability to listen will build that connection.

As Diogenes said, “We have two ears and one tongue so that we would listen more and talk less.”



CHRIS “CHUBBY” FREDERICK is the CEO and founder of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI’s 115 associates train and coach more than 1,400 shop owners every week

across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. This month’s article was written with the help of Coach Eric Twiggs. chubby@autotraining.net

Seven secrets to becoming a masterful listener

The opportunity to build trust and connection makes listening the secret to successful selling at your shop. I have mixed emotions about failing the pen test. I wish I had asked the right questions to start the listening process. However, if I had gotten the copier sales

job, I might never have started my career in automotive, and I wouldn’t be in position to listen to the recordings of you applying the secret to successful selling!

For a copy of “The Seven Secrets to Becoming a Masterful Listener,” go to www.ationlinetraining.com/2018-05 for a limited time.

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