

## ***Shop Owners: Dealing With That PRESSURE***

If you own an auto repair shop, there are times you get an influx of work that you weren't anticipating. Cars show up that weren't on the schedule or you're short one technician who's out sick. You're short one service writer, or your service writer has six people in front of them when they only anticipated three.

While this may be routine in running any auto repair shop, it is things like this that create enormous pressure on a shop! How do you deal with it?

Most shops cope with such pressure in one way: they compromise their standards. They cut corners. The priority is just to get that work done and out the door, whatever has to be done to make this happen.

### ***Servicing the Customer***

If you're really going to service a customer well, you're going to get the customer's complete information about how they use their car and about the vehicle itself, right up front. You're then going to do an excellent inspection and figure out everything the customer will need for that vehicle—not just what they came in for. You can then make a great customer out of that person because they can see you genuinely care, and they've never seen service like this anywhere else.

But it's very common that when a shop gets overwhelmed with many cars at once that they weren't expecting, they skip doing a good inspection. Instead of looking over the vehicle as would usually be done, they want to get the work done and get it out. I've seen this often in shops: the command is given, "Just change the oil and get the car out of here so we can get the next one in."

### ***Letting Income Slip Away***

The real problem with operating like this is that you're letting a whole lot of potential income walk right out the door with that customer. Even as simple as getting all of the customer's contact information upfront can be missed which results in no way to contact them for follow-up services.

Compromising a high standard by shortcutting or "only doing what must be done" often creates more problems than dealing with the pressure. In fact, snapping cars in

and out without inspecting them could be costing the shop tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars in any given year.

## ***You're Not Wrong!***

Don't misunderstand me—I've been there myself. When you're piled high with work, the priority is to get it done no matter what, and you have to compromise somewhere. It's usually the right thing to do.

But if you find yourself continuously in this situation as a shop owner, you're not addressing the real issues behind the pressure.

## ***The Common Problem***

The most common cause of this pressure is not having enough help. There just aren't enough staff in the shop to take up the slack if someone is ill or absent, or when you have all those extra cars show up. You can't take on any more production because you're already maxed out.

The solution is often as simple as hiring another person or more people. You can continue to compromise your standards when you're under pressure—but eventually your shop will go right out the bottom from doing so, or at best continue to “tread water.” Instead, you can do the smart thing: identify those areas in your shop where the pressure is coming from, and hire extra help into those areas.

## ***Stop Just Coping and Look***

Many shop owners consider that they just can't afford to hire more help. But the truth is, if you're going to really expand your shop, you can't afford *not* to hire more help. If you don't, you'll keep ending up in that same situation, time after time. If you take a wider look, it is often this one piece of the puzzle—hiring—that is causing fluctuations in your sales from week to week.

The biggest and best step you can take is to set aside the time to honestly look. Of course you have to cope with the immediate pressure—but take some undistracted time to look it over and discover where that pressure is coming from.

In addition to a possible lack of help, maybe one or more team members aren't fully pulling their weight and need to be replaced with someone who will. Troublesome team members are the ones who will continue to compromise your standards. You need staff who keep your standards, not compromise them.

Once you've examined and analyzed the scene, take action to hire some help for those areas, so the pressure eases off and you're not losing income.

## ***What Would It Look Like?***

Ask yourself how your shop would look if you could have people in there to relieve that pressure. How well would your shop function, then?

You'd be able to make more calls to your customer base. You'd be able to get more work in that you'd recommended to customers in the past. You'd be setting future appointments. You'd be getting out and selling your shop services to fleet companies.

That is what real expansion looks like. It forces you to continue to move forward instead of just getting stuck in a rut, constantly coping.

I'm currently working on a book for shop owners that will be released in the next few months, taking up this topic in great detail. Watch for it!

***\*Regularly check back for tips on running a totally successful auto repair shop.***