

sell more than merely the mechanical product which he produces; the necessary point of view must be that of selling motor transportation.

In the organization and operation of the most up-to-date repair shops, more and more attention is being given to the problem of customer contact. It is recognized by service managers that a repair shop has not only a mechanical function; it has also a business function,—that of creating good will, of lessening sales resistance, and of producing at the same time a satisfactory profit and loss statement. Quick service, well done, at low cost, must be supplemented by a careful cultivation of what might be termed organized customer contact.

There exists the necessity of training service men in personality and courtesy, and of instructing them in the maintenance and operating problems confronting owners, in order that they may more effectively cope with the broader aspects of their job. Many service stations employ what are called "service salesmen," not only to act as a clearing house between customer and shop when the vehicle comes to the service station but also to visit owners in their own places of business to extend desirable assistance on operation and maintenance problems.

Such owner contact, properly organized in a genuine spirit of helpfulness, is bound to result in added good will. It is, in a sense, a form of sales engineering. Such contact is of great assistance to the repair shop in maintaining a high volume of business. Organized personal contact, backed up by a proper analysis of what may be termed the repair market, enables the service manager to feel the pulse of his boss, the customer, and is invaluable to the manager who measures his results from the proper perspective. Last but not least, properly developed owner contact permits the repair shop to check its efficiency by detailed customer complaint analysis, both quantitative and qualitative.

Suitable records should be maintained in order that the Service Manager may be at all times completely posted as to the status of his department with the owners he serves or should serve. Such records are not only necessary in order to determine the effectiveness of his contact with owners, but are also useful to him in planning his repair sales quotas and his corresponding expense budgets.

Direct Cooperation with Sales Department

With regard to the third major function of service, direct cooperation with the sales department

(this function not applying, of course, to the independent garage), it is obvious that the previous two fundamentals, namely, manufacture and distribution of parts, and mechanical repair work, are, if properly executed, *indirect* cooperation of the highest type. There exist, however, certain important elements of the service job which constitute *direct* sales department cooperation.

The matter of organized customer contact has already been touched upon from the standpoint of the repair shop. This same contact of service personnel with owners is, if properly carried out, productive of worth-while results to the sales department. Because of the nature and purpose of the service man's call, his entree to the customer is often easier than that of the salesman. He has no cause to fear that malady which so frequently oppresses salesmen, known in trade circles as the "hot door knob." The service man has only cooperation to sell. His visit often paves the way for the salesman. Furthermore, his contact with the owner's operating and maintenance personnel, whom he meets on their own ground, is often by the very nature of his experience and training more effective than the solicitation of such personnel by salesmen; and the opinion of the owner's maintenance man, or his driver, is no small factor in the owner's analysis of what to buy.

Customer contact by service men provides the sales department with important information relative to customers' maintenance costs, operating conditions, sentiment toward the product and many other facts important to carefully planned sales solicitation. Such contact, furthermore, results in the discovery of additional sales prospects. In short, it is of great assistance in reinforcing the efforts of individual salesmen and in the whole proposition of sales planning and execution.

The service man used for contact work should possess, in addition to a thorough mechanical and motor transportation experience, the requisite alertness, courtesy, personality and ability to follow through to enable him to deal with owners under trying conditions. In addition to cooperation with owners in the solution of their problems, he must, of course, spend much of his time with the owner who brings his truck to the service station for repairs, and whose frame of mind is by no means friendly. Repairs are ordinarily chargeable to expense—not capital—and the selling of a repair bill

is sometimes more difficult than the selling of the product itself. Truly the service salesman needs a sense of humor!

It is only by the employment of personnel of this type that automotive service will be able to eradicate the bad name which has followed it like a gloomy shadow; it is this type of service man who can lend real cooperation to the efforts of the sales department.

Another element of direct cooperation with sales lies in the technical assistance which must be furnished in the problem of meeting customers' requirements, and in the avoidance of overselling. The occasional unfamiliarity of salesman with the technical and the mechanical phases of the business may at times lead him to deliver to the purchaser the wrong transportation unit or his desire for extra commission may in certain instances result in his selling a model larger and more expensive than requirements demand. Absolute coordination of Sales and Service is necessary to insure against overselling.

In addition, an alert service department is of no little use to the sales organization in general market analysis with a view to anticipation of future expansion of service facilities in line with sales expectations. The establishment of such facilities in advance of passing need is often excellent business policy.

It is an essential principle of management that sales and service must be closely coordinated and governed by the same underlying policies.

Direct Cooperation with Owners and Prospects

In discussing the previously mentioned functions of service it has been impossible to avoid mention of certain factors involved in direct cooperation with owners. As in the case of cooperation with the sales department it is obvious that the proper handling of parts distribution and mechanical repair work is the basis of owner cooperation. There are, however, certain possibilities for helpfulness which can best be described as *direct* cooperation, their aim being that of extending to owners the benefit of the experience and facilities of the manufacturer or dealer in various problems of the customers' own establishment.

Certain of the more important factors of such cooperation may be summarized as—

1. Providing trained operating and maintenance personnel;

2. Training owners' personnel;
 3. Furnishing technical information;
 4. Assistance on problems of tools and methods in the owner's plant;
 5. Assistance in stockroom organization and in proper balancing of spare parts inventories;
 6. Assistance in analysis of operation and maintenance costs and in elimination of causes of excess.
- In this connection, it has been estimated that something like 70 per cent of all maintenance expense on motor vehicles results from lack of proper attention on the part of the owner in the tightening of loose nuts and bolts, etc., and in the highly important matter of periodical lubrication as specified by the manufacturer.

The proper exercise of this function by trained service personnel is obviously of mutual benefit to owner and manufacturer alike.

Cooperation with Factory

The fifth and last service function, that of direct cooperation with the factory, has, as I have said before, the dual object of improvement of product and assistance in the all important problem of *what to make* so as best to fulfill customers' requirements. In both instances the basis of cooperation is that of furnishing prompt, complete and accurate data from actual field experience.

Such reports, constituting a definitely formulated routine procedure on the part of the manufacturer, are of extremely valuable assistance to the home office. Engineering and production departments fortified by a true picture of actual field results will avoid many a pitfall. The requirements of the service department as to simplicity, accessibility and reduction of models to a reasonable minimum are necessarily reflections of the requirements of the owner, and a proper statistical expression of such essentials make for lower costs and satisfied customers.

Conclusion

Summarizing this brief discussion, I have attempted to review some of the more important aspects of automotive service, describing roughly its status in the field of distribution, its specific functions, its organization and some of its problems of management.

Service, this "infant industry," is emerging from its swaddling clothes and is fast becoming a real personality in the automotive family.