



Creating Completely Satisfied Customers

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MARKETING is everything you do to bring customers to your door.

SELLING is what you do after they arrive to convince them to give you the keys.

CUSTOMER SERVICE is how you generate completely satisfied customers so they both return and refer others.

The goal of every collision center should be to create “completely satisfied” customers. The distinction is that they are not merely “satisfied” but they are so pleased by the experience that they willingly and enthusiastically refer your business to others.

The above three actions are a continuous cycle with each element supporting and feeding the next step of the cycle. Marketing provides customers to sell; selling provides work for the shop, and customer service assures a steady flow of referrals to refill the pipeline.



Studies on collision customer loyalty have cited four elements that are most important factors:

1. **Keep them informed** – Set realistic expectations, let them know when they should receive an update and keep them in the loop whether everything is on schedule, or if there has been an unexpected challenge or delay.
2. **Deliver on time** – Do what you said you would do. If there are unexpected surprises, let them know; re-set expectations and then deliver on that.
3. **Treat them well** – Give them prompt, un-divided, attention. Be empathetic and appreciative. Show them that you care.
4. **Everything complete at delivery** – Make sure it’s right before you arrange pickup. No customer wants to have to return to fix what should have been fixed correctly the first time.



There are four opportunities to deliver complete customer satisfaction to each customer.

Opportunity #1: Arrival and Greeting

We all know the importance of a good first impression regardless of how they may “arrive” at your collision center: In-person, via an incoming phone call, or via an outgoing phone call from you as the result of an insurance assignment.



Opportunity #2: Drop Off

When the customer drops off the vehicle you have your second opportunity. Make sure they know (in advance) what is expected of them at Drop Off: Payment arrangements/acceptable forms of payment, to remove any personal items, and if a rental is involved (driver's license, credit card, insurance card).

Opportunity #3: Proactive Vehicle Status

Keeping the customer informed is the first of the four elements to creating a completely satisfied customer. It is even more important than delivering a vehicle on time. The key, here, is to have a process and to assign responsibility to proactively communicate with customers throughout the repair by their preferred communication method: home phone, cell phone, text, email, etc. You need not communicate with every customer every day, but it is essential to set realistic expectations *and to meet them*.

Opportunity #4: Active Delivery

This step means going over the vehicle and the repair with the customer and reselling them on the work you performed. Make sure you show that you took care of their "special concern" whether it was color match, repair of frame damage to manufacturer specs, or repair of "old" damage. Make sure it is "right" and that they are completely satisfied with the repair.

Opportunity #5: Customer Follow-up

Our primary mission in creating Completely Satisfied Customers is for them to return to our collision center when they need collision repair and to enthusiastically refer others to us.

If you receive feedback that any customer is less than completely satisfied, this is your one and only opportunity to **RECOVER** from that situation. To do this, call the customer to discover the nature or origin of their concern, express empathy, and then take action to remedy the problem unconditionally. Shops that handle these situations well can recover from an error and turn a less-than-satisfied customer into a Completely Satisfied Customer.

At each interaction, state your commitment to assure their complete satisfaction.

A Tip to Consider

Evaluate the personalities, customer service skills, and empathy of your front office personnel to determine who has the greatest "service ability." Place them in the positions with the most customer contact: Receptionist or Customer Service Representative. Have them meet and greet your customers, answer incoming calls, and perform outbound vehicle status calls.

This TIPs flyer was written by John Halstead & edited by Georgia Thorson of RDA

John Halstead 410-336-3575 jhalstead@mindspring.com