**Master Service Advisor**

 ***By Valerie Ziebron***

Why is it that when we compare two service advisors working the same amount of hours under the same conditions, one often bills twice as much as the other? The answer: one is more than likely treating the position as a career, building customer loyalty through proactive processes that keep communication flowing, while the other service advisor is struggling to keep his or her head above water. This does not necessarily mean that the less productive advisor is not trying or does not care about the customer. Productivity in the service department is often related to learning how to properly use the communication tools of the master service advisor trade.

Here are ten of the tools that have helped the best service advisors break shop records for profitability, while keeping techs and customers pleased.

**Tool #1**

**The Phone:**

The phone should always serve as a moneymaking tool for taking appointments and selling additional service. If it is constantly ringing and there is no protocol for answering calls, the service department ends up with a reactive response that usually wastes time and harms CSI.

**Tool #2**

**Menu of Services:**

Customers are more likely to buy if they are offered a visual menu of needed services. This tool helps create the sensible impression of caring for their investments in their boats, rather than creating the uncomfortable feeling of 'upsell'.

**Tool #3**

**Blue Painters Tape:**

When doing a walk through with the customer, take the tape out with you to the customer's boat and simply put a piece on every part the customer wants serviced. This saves time and confusion on the tech's part and helps to identify any additional needed work during the write up in clear, visual customer communication.

**Tool #4**

**Service Diagnostic Form:**

Getting the customer to write in their own words why they are at your shop and what they want accomplished is a fabulous addition to the write up. It helps to eliminate diagnosing in the drive and serves as a great paper trail.

**Tool #5**

**Business Card:**

Not only is a business card a professional touch, but some advisors use their cards to set a 'call back time' so the customer does not feel the need to call the dealership for information on job status - very proactive.

**Tool #6**

**Colored Marker:**

Write the call back time on the work order with the customer present and put a colored dot next to the customer's preferred method of contact (cell, e-mail, etc.)

**Tool #7**

**A Route Sheet:**

Nothing beats this simple form for keeping track of all open work orders and call back times for all customers. It is the service advisor's central command sheet for dispatch, parts, quality control and communication.

**Tool #8**

**Service Inspection Form:**

Few things add to profitability as much as increasing billable hours per repair order. This tool can also boost CSI by enabling customers to make led trips to the shop in a boating season. Be sure to give the customer a copy of this powerful visual tool.

**Tool #9**

**Computer:**

Make friends with this efficiency wiz to help get more done in less time, as well as track your efficiency, parts, service reminders, and much more. Take time to know your system inside and out. Figure out how to make it work harder for you.

**Tool #10**

**Follow-Up System:**

It can be as simple as Post-it notes in a day-timer reminding you of boats that need additional work, or fine turning your computer to alert your customers of service needs. It is especially important to follow up with customers that you have not seen in awhile. There are numerous CSI and new boat selling opportunities here that can be tapped into through a thorough follow-up system.

   The best techs take pride in the tools they use to communicate and multi task on a daily basis. They keep them organized and know how to use them. They understand that communication tools are important investments that can deliver a strong return when properly used. Use these ten tools to help your service department maximize efficiency and you will see your dealership's profitability increase before your eyes.