



Great Employees Aren't Born, They're Trained

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How much time are you investing to maximize the return on one of your most valuable assets – your employees? Do your employees understand and follow through on what you need them to do? Are they knowledgeable about your products and services? Can they answer customers' questions with authority and confidence? Are they delivering the service experience that you and, more importantly, your customers expect?

Studies have shown that investing in employee training will pay back many times over, and in many ways. Employees who understand what is expected of them, and are capable of meeting or exceeding those expectations, are happier and more satisfied in their jobs. Plus, employee satisfaction translates to customer satisfaction, which leads to higher retention, more and better reviews, increased new customer acquisition and revenue growth.

Training is not simply about helping employees master assigned tasks, whether that is performing oil changes, writing up service orders or processing payments. Training is about instilling confidence and empowering employees to feel secure and comfortable in their jobs so they can be more effective and proactive. Yes, they need to acquire some essential skills, but good training is about helping employees think and feel like subject matter experts so that they can in turn gain the trust of your customers.

Are your employees able to explain the difference between the various full synthetic motor oil product options? In particular, why one product within the same brand line is priced higher than another? Your employees should be able to educate customers to help them make a product decision that is best for them and their vehicle. Employees that can help customers make educated purchase decisions will feel better about themselves, and by extension better about their workplace.

One fundamental question is: do your employees understand your objectives as the business owner? Do they understand how the business generates revenue or calculates profit, which has an impact on their compensation? A good portion of your employee's training should be focused on ensuring alignment with the goals of the business and how each employee contributes. If you are running a promotion, or looking to

manage inventory on a certain item, make sure your employees are fully informed so that they can educate customers in a no-pressure manner.

Customer service skills may not come naturally to some people, but those can be taught with practice. Employees must understand the importance of making customers feel welcomed and appreciated, like smiling, calling them by their name, and talking through inspection findings. Since customers cannot visualize what is going on under the hood, employees should explain the services being performed so that customers can have confidence that their vehicles are well cared for.

Training is not a one-time event. The principles of what is being trained should be reinforced regularly through real-life examples; for instance, acknowledging positive behavior or congratulating employees for an incremental sale. And if an employee falls short, take a moment to explain how they can do better next time. Show your employees that you are invested in their progress.

Unexpected rewards, either planned or unplanned, like an occasional team lunch or a gift card for a local coffee shop for exceptional customer service, can go a long way toward building team spirit and a sense of belonging as well as making your employees feel valued and appreciated. Employee appreciation is especially important at a time when the oil change business – like so many others – is experiencing staff shortages and turnover. Now is a good time to refocus training efforts to make sure your employees are not only better equipped to do their jobs but understand and feel confident about their roles as contributors to the overall success of the business.

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