

Guide for Hiring the Superstar Service Advisors

By Bob Cooper

If you want to build a successful auto repair business, you will need to have a number of things in place, yet nothing is more important than having service advisors who can sell in a professional and ethical way. In today's competitive environment you're seeing vehicles less frequently, customers have greater access to information, and they have choices unlike ever before. So here's a guide to help you hire the superstar advisors who will take your shop to the top:

- 1. Look for talent.** When you are looking for the superstars, never forget: talent is king. Talent is something that can't be developed or taught, so you need to make sure that the prospects you are interviewing truly are "people people", and that they naturally smile. Otherwise, you'll spend years trying to develop your advisors into something that they may never become.
- 2. Look for drive.** Every superstar who I have met or hired has been goal-oriented, has had a positive attitude, and has been competitive, quick-witted, persuasive and driven. Similarly to talent, these are all personality traits that can't be taught, so be sure to look closely during your interviews.
- 3. Look for a track-record of success.** Henry Ford once said, "Tell me what you have done, not what you can do." At Elite we take this a step further by saying it's not just what prospective employees have done, but more importantly, what they have accomplished in their careers. For example, the fact that someone has been an advisor for years isn't nearly as important as the sales growth they have brought about, records they have set, etc. This is why you need to quiz them on their accomplishments. If they have been in the business for a few years, and they can't give you any specific sales accomplishments, then there's a good probability that there won't be any meaningful accomplishments achieved if they work with you either.
- 4. Look for a win/win attitude and ethics.** Over the years I have discovered that there are basically three types of salespeople. First, there are the win/lose advisors who care about their own needs, at a cost to the customer. These are the advisors who will drive up your sales, and erode your customer base at the same time. The second category is the lose/win advisors, who are overly sympathetic, and who will give your store away in order to please each and every customer. The real superstars are the advisors who fall into the win/win category, because they have the ability to close sales, will make sure your customers are satisfied and make the right decisions, and will help you build a more profitable auto repair business. Ethics is the hardest trait to judge during the interview process, which is why we are such strong supporters of pre-employment behavioral testing.

5. Pay close attention to their interests. Although there are always exceptions, service advisors who are looking for an hourly rate, a salary, or a big guarantee, may very well be looking for a job rather than an opportunity. On the other hand, the advisors who are interested in commission-based pay are typically self-motivated, and will help you drive up your sales.

6. Take them for a test drive. You should hand every applicant an estimate and have them sell you a service. I have discovered over the years that if someone can't do a good job of selling us during a role-play, they won't be able to sell our customers either. You should also have them do a role-play where you act like a first-time caller. I can tell you from first-hand experience that I have interviewed many service advisors who aced the interview, and then miserably failed during the role-plays.

7. Take advantage of pre-employment testing. There are a number of tests you should consider, but the three at the top of our list would be pre-employment physicals, drug screenings and behavioral assessments. At Elite we have found that the behavioral assessments are priceless in that they are inexpensive and quick, they can be taken online, and they reveal many strengths, weaknesses and propensities. In addition to revealing how well your prospective employees work under stress, and with other people, these tests can also detect irregularities in honesty, which could be an indication of questionable ethics.

Follow these tips, and you'll have a staff full of service advisors who drive up your sales, while always having your customers' best interest in mind.

Since 1990, Bob Cooper has been the president of Elite, a company that strives to help shop owners reach their goals and live happier lives, while elevating the industry at the same time. The company offers coaching and training from the industry's top shop owners, service advisor training, peer groups, along with online and in-class sales, marketing and shop management courses. You can learn more about Elite by visiting www.EliteWorldwide.com, or calling 800-204-3548.