

December 2012

UNI-Scoop

THE UNI-SELECT BUSINESS MAGAZINE

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UNI-Scoop

THE UNI-SELECT BUSINESS MAGAZINE



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Looking ahead to a brighter future for the aftermarket in 2013

As 2012 comes to an end, I think we are all looking forward to a brighter future in terms of what is ahead for the automotive aftermarket in 2013. What better way than to start planning and thinking about it today!

What does our market look like? Where are there growth opportunities? Where do I start?

Well – the best place to start is building your Strategic Plan. Now some of you may think that a Strategic Plan is not for everyone...but it is. Anyone running a business should have one. A Strategic Plan is basically a road-map of where you want to be and how to get there.

How do you start? Simple. Look at your market place: use the mapping tools Uni-Select has provided to identify the opportunities and study your market. Identify the threats in the marketplace. Review YOUR offering vs. the competition and what you can do to outsell them. What is the value-add that you will provide? Remember: it is not always about price! Very often, it is based on the relationship and trust you have built with your customer; and it is about providing them with all the solutions THEY need to grow.

Determine where you want to be and what your goal is. Define the strategy and plan based on your strengths. Concentrate your efforts in this area and build a structure to support this plan.

And don't forget to involve your teams – make them feel like they are part of the plan. Empower them. If they feel they have some accountability and sense of achievement within the plan, they will be more committed to help attain the goals that were set out together.

I also encourage you to attend our North American convention that will be held in Las Vegas from February 24th to 27th, 2013 where you will take away invaluable tips from our seminars and speaker series, which will help you execute your Strategic Plan. We will focus on such concepts as "Outselling your competition;" "Market conditions don't determine growth – You do!" "Walk a mile in their shoes;" "Automotive Aftermarket Industry trends....where will we be in five years?" and many more that you won't want to miss! What a better way to start 2013 on the right foot, than with the right plan?

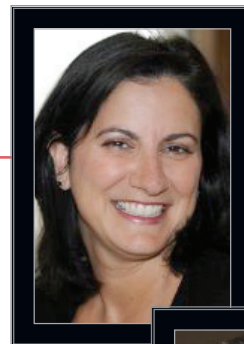
On behalf of Mike and myself, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very safe, happy and healthy Holiday Season and we look forward to seeing you in 2013!!



Linda Donnini
Senior Director of Marketing,
Uni-Select Canada



Mike Buzzard
Sr. Director Marketing & Technology,
USA Automotive Group



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UNI-SELECT RECOGNIZED FOR ITS INNOVATION IN CHANGE MANAGEMENT!

Uni-Select won the Bronze for its innovation in Change Management during its participation at the *Salon sur les meilleures pratiques d'affaires* (Best Business Practices Fair) organized by the *Mouvement québécois de la qualité*, which was held at the Palais des Congrès of Montreal on November 8, 2012.

Selected amongst 40 improvement projects presented by companies of all sizes and economic sectors, the Build-A-Car project has been selected by the public and the jury for its approach in dealing with the human side of change during the implementation of its new Enterprise Resource Planning System.

The Build-A-Car workshop replicates Uni-Select's supply chain, allowing employees to learn about the benefits of the new processes in place. The activity offers employees an overview of the latest technology that they will benefit from at Uni-Select. In fact, the Build-A-Car workshop has allowed, since its creation and implementation, to reduce the amount of support time required by its employees after go-live.

Finally, all the battery-operated Fisher Price Power Wheels Ford Mustang vehicles assembled during the workshops are given to charities that are helping children in each region where Uni-Select is established. At the end of the implementation, Uni-Select will have donated more than 150 toy cars across Canada and the United States.

The Mouvement québécois de la qualité's mission is to help organizations explore, share and implement best management practices so they become the best in the world in their respective industries. Pauline Marois, Premier of Quebec, was present to deliver the prizes during a Gala luncheon. The awards are given by the Government of Quebec to the most successful companies having submitted their candidacy.



Top: The team of employees from the Memphis Distribution Center, that participated in the Build-A-Car initiative

Above: The team at work, building the car, at the Chicago Distribution Center

Left: Participating employees from Uni-Select Head Office, as follows: Left to right: Isabelle Morin, Pierre-Luc Monetta, Sylvie Emmell, Kaven Delarosbil, Marianne G. Courchesne, Isabelle Dubé

PICKING UP THE PACE

Uni-Select's NHRA Sponsorship Is Firing on All Cylinders

BY ANDREW BROOKS



© James Tutori/Stockphoto/Thinkstock



Uni-Select's sponsorship of National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) races across the US is making huge strides and helping to develop the Auto-Plus brand. One of the biggest races of the year for Auto-Plus, the Auto-Plus Nationals in Reading, Pennsylvania, ran October 5-7 and capped Uni-Select's sponsorship program for 2012. Like the other races held over the course of the year, the

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NHRA Nationals were a big success, says Uni-Select USA promotions manager Mary Olson.

The event got underway on the Friday of the three-day event with 100 customers present, and followed through on Saturday and Sunday with hospitality events at the track. Even the rainy weather on Sunday, which forced postponement of the final race to Monday (with driver Mike Neff emerging victorious), did nothing to dim the success of the event. Olson notes that the Nationals attracted more than 1,200 Auto-Plus customers. "And we had the honor of choosing two of our biggest jobbers, Gene Greene of Gilbertsville Auto Supply and Roger Church of Church's Auto Parts, to serve as the Official Starter and Grand Marshal of the race," Olson says. They both received their honorary plaques on Sunday.

This year has been a huge one for the Auto-Plus sponsorship, with a total of ten races on the schedule, a big step up from the three races sponsored in 2011.

"We've had over 5,000 customers attend the races with Auto-Plus over the year," Olson says in summarizing the season. "We've seen sales increases around the promotions we've done for customers to attend the races, and this year we had a midway experience – which was new for Auto-Plus – where over 22,000 race fans visited our Auto-Plus midway tent."

Olson notes that Auto-Plus also had Blake Alexander, driver of the Auto Service Plus car, drive at all 10 races this year – a huge help for branding the service center membership program. "Blake is one of the youngest drivers in the NHRA races, and he did a great job throughout the year helping us with our branding strategy by signing autographs at our midway, and at our hospitality events," Olson says. He also made appearances

2012 Takes Off

Uni-Select sponsored ten NHRA races in 2012, a big increase over the three events sponsored last year.

NHRA Gatornationals,
Gainesville, Florida,
March 8-11 – 300+ attendees

NHRA Four Wide Nationals,
Charlotte, North Carolina,
April 13-15 – 250+ attendees

NHRA Full Throttle,
Atlanta, Georgia,
May 4-6 – 400+ attendees

NHRA SuperNationals,
Englishtown, New Jersey,
May 31-June 3 – 300 attendees

Ford NHRA Thunder Valley,
Bristol, Tennessee,
June 15-17 – 250 attendees

NHRA Full Throttle,
Norwalk, Ohio,
July 5-8 – 500 attendees
Northwest National,
Seattle, Washington,
August 3-5 – 300 attendees

MAC Tools US Nationals,
Indianapolis, Indiana,
Aug. 31-Sept. 2 – 500 attendees

AAA Texas NHRA Fall Nationals ,
Dallas, Texas,
Sept. 23 – 250 attendees

Auto-Plus NHRA Nationals,
Reading, Pennsylvania,
Oct. 5-7 – 1,200+ attendees

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at some Auto-Plus customer appreciation events throughout the year.

Olson says that Auto-Plus has new and exciting plans for 2013 to strengthen the branding strategy

that was built up in 2011 and reinforced this year! "We want to thank all our vendor sponsors that helped make 2012 a success and we look forward to a better year in 2013!"

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BY ANDREW BROOKS

SERVICE AND SELECTION

RIGONI MAKES SURE QUALITY SERVICE BEGINS FROM THE CUSTOMER'S FIRST PHONE CALL

For Mike Rigoni, president of Xpress Auto Parts in Fort Myers, Florida, customer service is the main priority. Rigoni says that the great service he and his staff offers is what differentiates Xpress Auto Parts from the competition. "We specialize in offering spectacular service to our wholesale customers," Rigoni says. "Service starts when the phone rings."

That service ethic has helped them weather the storms that have sunk many a competitor. The company was founded in October, 2005, and experienced good growth for the first couple of years, until the economic downturn took hold. Since then it's been a struggle for Xpress Auto Parts to regain lost ground.

"Now we're working harder, and we're probably doing more with the new business we're getting," Rigoni says. Xpress Auto Parts is close to where they were before the crash, and Rigoni is optimistic that things are picking up, but it has changed the way he does business.

"The economic crunch took our margins down, so we have to be as competitive and efficient as possible," he says. "But as long as we have competitive pricing we'll win the customers back over." Rigoni points out, however, that with the commitment to great service that Rigoni and all his employees share, Xpress Auto Parts could probably charge 10 per cent more and still make

the sale based on level and quality of service alone.

Xpress Auto Parts is a single-store enterprise, with three full-time and two part-time employees operating out of a 6,000-square-foot building. At its founding, Xpress Auto Parts in fact took over from an earlier auto parts store that had operated there for the previous 20 years. Xpress Auto Parts is a broad-based business and most of its 100-odd customers are independent installers. There's a retail showroom on-site, but Rigoni estimates that 90 per cent of the business that Xpress Auto Parts does is on the wholesale side. Four independent contractors handle parts deliveries.

Xpress has been with Uni-Select for just over a year now, and while Rigoni takes advantage of a number of programs and services, one Uni-Select standout for him is inventory to warehouse. "They've got a huge inventory, and they sell it at the right price," is the simple formula as described by Rigoni. But he also finds value

the Uni-Select E-Modeling inventory management system (which won the elite Polk Inventory Efficiency Award in 2009). "It tailors my inventory to the cars that are on the roads in my area of business operations – it's been very, very good for us," Rigoni says.

Rigoni and his team also get good value from the Uni-Select Ad Generator, which enables jobbers to assemble professional-quality flyers with high-quality images, and which Rigoni finds very easy to use. Xpress also uses Uni-Select's well-known advertising and marketing programs for both their retail flyers and their tool equipment catalogues. "We can also tap into their PB&E – the paint, body and equipment market," Rigoni says. The PB&E program offers a huge selection of paint (including the Low VOC – waterborne paints and related additives); abrasives, coatings and sealers; body fillers, reinforced fillers, repair materials, fibreglass and resins, plastic repair and putties; masking products; detailing products; and aerosol paints and specialized chemicals. "Having these kinds of programs and services to offer really helps to build better customer relationships," Rigoni says.

Rigoni counts seven Auto Service Plus shops among his customers and says he is looking forward to adding some smaller customers under the Select Auto Xpert brand (SAX) as well. "With the Auto Service Plus customers, they stock by inventory," Rigoni says. "I'm personally visiting them every week to talk, to do their inventory, to make sure everything is going well – if they don't stock my inventory, I see them at least once or twice a month. But most importantly we talk to them on the phone pretty much every day."

Xpress Auto Parts had been with a competitor until a year ago. What persuaded Rigoni to make the switch?



Firstly, he says, he knew a lot of the Uni-Select people, and this is a people-centred business after all. But another big inducement was the technology offering that Uni-Select has to support its programs and services.

"They have better stuff on this side," Rigoni says. "I use

all the high-tech programs and services they have – their advanced technology gives me all the tools I need to grow and prosper in the future." The competitor had similar offerings, but they weren't leading-edge to the same degree. Rigoni is making his first forays into the use of social media, such as Facebook, where he recently launched a business page. Here too, Uni-Select offers support and Rigoni anticipates opening a page on Uni-Select's US hub soon.

Rigoni finds that the Uni-Select programs that he can offer his customers provide him with a point of competitive differentiation. "These guys do have all the programs," he says, "but if they don't use them every day they may not always be able to get the most out of them. So if they do have a labour claim or question about the program we can just give them a call or go there in person and I can walk them through it."

Rigoni recalls one example where a customer wanted to use the Identifix vehicle diagnostics program but they weren't sure how to go about it. They called Xpress Auto Parts, and Rigoni showed them how to use the program in person. That kind of service can really cement a relationship with a customer.

"I can see the writing on the wall with Uni-Select," Rigoni says. "They're a growing company and they have all the tools I need to be successful in the future. They give me excellent support – the support I need, the programs I need, and they have the people who have the same goals that I do."





YES MAN

LUNENBURG AUTO GIVES ITS CUSTOMERS WHAT THEY WANT, ESPECIALLY IF IT'S OBSCURE OR HARD TO FIND.

BY NOELLE STAPINSKY

Nova Scotia-based Lunenburg Auto Parts operates on the motto “If we don’t have it, we’ll get it.” And over the past six years it has been luring customers in with its successful radio campaign, which advertises that if it’s a hard-to-find part or product, Lunenburg will find it for you. No matter what it is, the answer is always yes. So, of course, when the company was asked for a 20-litre pail of petroleum jelly, it delivered it in two days – no questions asked.

Actually, Lunenburg supplies the automotive, industrial and marine industries, and this peculiar order was for a tall ship that uses Vaseline on the mast to help hoist the sails.

As for its challenging broadcast, owner and second-generation jobber, Ian Creaser, says that people actually call in and repeat the advertisement to his counter staff.

Specializing in foreign and domestic vehicles – new or old – Lunenburg will hunt down pretty much anything. “And we offer our customers a service to get older parts rebuilt with various rebuilding suppliers,” says Creaser. “Just recently we sent brake calipers off to be rebuilt for a Mercedes Benz because the part number was not in North American catalogues.”

Located in the coastal town of Lunenburg, the store was originally opened by Creaser’s father in 1963 as Lunenburg Auto and Sporting Supply Company Ltd. – supplying the community with everything from automotive parts and fishing industry supplies to sporting goods and equipment, and hardware. Back then, the automotive side of the business ran under the Handy Andy banner.

“In the early 80s we had a fire at our store that shut us down for about five months. When we went to restock we decided to join the Uni-Select program,” says Creaser. Uni-Select’s marketing and training programs were a

good fit for Lunenburg, who made the switch more than 20 years ago and never looked back. And for the past 16 years, since Creaser purchased the company from his father, they’ve been operating under the Auto Plus banner.

Today, Lunenburg Auto employs five at its 4,000-sq.-ft. store, which includes a service department with three bays and one technician. And two years ago, it opened a second smaller satellite location in the neighbouring town of Chester, where it employs two people.

“Today, we find ourselves going after not just the traditional automotive business, but also looking at industrial and all the other aspects of the community and what it needs,” says Creaser, who joined the family business in 1984 after a foray in the commercial fishing business and graduating from university with a bachelor of science in marine biology.

For its industrial accounts it supplies such things as lubricants, belts, hoses and batteries. Lunenburg also provides the local inshore fishing industry [lobster fisherman] with filters, batteries, lighting, etc.

Creaser got his start on the counter when he was 10-years-old, working part-time at the family business, and today, he says, “I still spend a lot of time on the counter with my employees. I started on the counter... it’s hard to leave it.”

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To keep his people – whom he says is the pride of the company – on top of industry trends and technology Lunenburg has a focus on training. “We use training from all the manufacturers we deal with, such as Walker and Blue Streak. And we also participate in the Uni-Select program for our counterpeople, as well as our customers,” says Creaser.

Since Uni-Select’s program includes courses for technicians, Lunenburg offers those courses to its installers and shop owners.

“One of the first courses I ever took from Uni-Select was called ‘Feet on the Street.’ I think that was one of the best investments I ever made in training,” says Creaser. “It gave me a better appreciation for my customers, how to look at them and how to approach them. It’s not just about looking at them as sales, but looking at ways of helping them manage their business. That’s where I’ve had a lot of success with my customers. We’ve created a great business-to-business relationship working together to be successful in a small community.”

And to keep the dialogue and knowledge flowing, all of Lunenburg’s staff subscribe to industry magazines to keep up with what’s happening and stay on top of trends. “If there’s a good article on market trends in retail, or a good exhaust feature, we’ll all talk about it together,” says Creaser.

At Lunenburg, constant contact with its customers is essential. Using Uni-Select’s DAVE and ASP Central Point web platforms, technicians can access its inventory 24-7. They can do stock checks, order online or look up parts. Any online orders that are placed print off at the store, where staff will pick up the order and deliver it. In addition, Lunenburg utilizes Wrenchhead to access Uni-Select’s entire inventory in its distribution centers across Canada.

“We also have Uni-Select The Specialist and SAX accounts as part of our customer base,” says Creaser. “It’s been really great for us to utilize the loyalty programs and SAX rebates, and the training and marketing information that our installers get. That’s been a real help for us.”

One thing that impresses Creaser most about being a Uni-Select member is that they ask the members for advice and information. “They gave me a chance to be on the national advisory board. I learned a lot from the Uni-Select management and from other jobbers across Canada. It opened my eyes to the other markets and the issues jobbers are facing and that those issues are all very similar across the country. I think being on that board really helped me as an individual and a business person.”

A universal issue and challenge for today’s jobber is to help service shops shift into more of a preventative maintenance mode, and to adapt to educating their customers about the importance of maintenance. Lunenburg staff is constantly talking to their installers about how they need to treat their customers and inform them on maintenance issues with their vehicles. Most technicians in the area are using ASP Central Point, Mitchell or ALLDATA to access maintenance schedules and OE specifications.

“We do offer them a preventative maintenance schedule program, which is utilizing inspection reports and videos for training installers,” says Creaser. “But it’s a constant struggle to educate and get them to change their ways.”

In the rapidly evolving aftermarket industry, Lunenburg Auto’s knack for change is quintessential to its success in a small community. And as it monitors and adapts its offerings to cater to the constantly changing market around them, future growth is on the horizon for this business that will only answer “Yes” to any request.



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We're thrilled to announce that we've booked an impressive roster of special guests to join us at the upcoming *Win As One* convention in Las Vegas! Each of these remarkable individuals will share their unique perspective and insights as part of our speaker and seminar series, on February 25 and 26, 2013.

CHECK OUT SOME OF OUR EXCITING GUEST SPEAKERS!

TOM CONNELLAN:

Walk a Mile In Their Shoes: Creating Customer Loyalty

Today's customer is tougher, smarter, and more difficult to win over than ever before. No one knows this better than Tom Connellan, who brings a vast range of experience to bear as a customer service coach and consultant. Tom emphasizes that your company's brand exists entirely in the mind of your customer; how you shape their experience through customer service is the key to winning their loyalty.

JIM KNIGHT: Leadership For Growth

A veteran with more than 35 years in the service sector, Jim Knight is former head of training and development for Hard Rock Café, a role that involved leading every facet of the organization's customer service strategy. Jim will share insights into how you can be a stronger leader for your team and in your market; how to motivate your people to achieve greatness; the importance of leading a winning culture; and how this naturally leads your team to turn customer service into your winning advantage.

CHRISTOPHER DICK :

Social Media 101: Connecting To Win

As the top-performing Account Executive at AOL Canada, Christopher Dick does more than talk about social

media – he lives it every day, guiding clients through their digital strategies, in businesses ranging from a small family operation to the world's largest automaker.

MARK KING: Coaching to Win

Mark King has heard it all. "We're doing all we can." "This is the way it's always been done." "The golf market is a no-growth industry." Yet under his leadership as CEO, slumping Taylor Made-Adidas Golf began outdistancing its competition, growing from \$300 million to over \$1 billion in sales in less than a decade to take top spot on the leaderboard. King will share his strategies for coaching your team to challenge their preconceptions, exceed expectations, and even change the rules of the game.

AND WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED...

Stay tuned for more information on other guest speakers, great entertainment surprises, activities for your spouses, along with details on how you can pre-register for the seminars you want to attend!

We will be communicating updates and information on the business seminars, the trade show, our exciting destination, all activities for spouses, and more, while answering your questions on the convention's Facebook fan page!

So why not join in on the conversation!

We invite you to visit our page and become a fan! You can also share information with us, ask questions and exchange with the team as well as your fellow members!



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BY JIM ANDERTON

WHY SHOPS FAIL AT CUSTOMER SERVICE... AND HOW TO FIX IT



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INCREASING SALES TO REPAIR SHOPS MEANS INCREASING SALES BY REPAIR SHOPS...YET MANY CAN'T MAKE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE AND GREAT SALES VOLUMES

The automotive aftermarket is a classic industrial distribution model. Jobbers and OEMs fill a supply chain that's driven by retail sales in bays across the country. And as the key demand-pull driver of parts sales, automotive service shop staffs are better trained, better equipped and better able to fix cars and trucks than at any time in history. Ever wonder why, then, every consumer survey, even in this highly competitive retailing environment, reports a serious lack of customer care? The supply chain as a whole is faster, more accurate and delivers better value than ever, yet the end-user feels ignored, or worse, cheated. Why?

BUSINESS OWNERS FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE SALE

Jobbers and W/Ds move greater volumes of product today than at any time in history, and are challenged with maintaining a strong understanding of turns, inventory control, cash flow and pricing. Today's service shops won't carry large inventories on site and they are demanding ever faster service from the jobbers and W/Ds.

Because of the large numbers of vehicles these service operations repair and maintain every week, and the large amounts of parts ordered and placed on these vehicles, it becomes very easy to look at each repair and maintenance job as just another transaction.

As a jobber and W/D, you know from personal experience why that is. Every one of you owns a vehicle and we know that a vehicle repair is different than most other consumer retail purchases. Buying an iPad or a new jacket is something you are eager to do. A vehicle

repair, for most of us, is a grudge purchase; necessary, yes, but unwanted, unexpected and usually at the cost of another and more desirable transaction. Consumers see the retail repair this way: the fact that a good service operation delivers excellent value and a high-quality job, using the high-quality parts you have provided, is meaningless when the result, to the vehicle owner, is a vehicle that performs the same as it did before the breakdown. Basically, here is the simple reality: The more a shop spends with a jobber or W/D, the more profitable that jobber or W/D is. The consumer does not see it the same way. They see a lighter pocketbook.

This means the approach to the consumer has to be highly sympathetic and understanding, regardless of the technical reality of the vehicle. From the consumers' perspective, their vehicles have betrayed them and cost them money, so shops can't expect a good mood. Instead, they must point out the only silver lining possible in the circumstances: that

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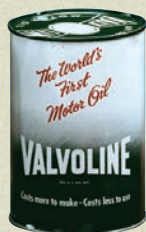
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of all time



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mileage engines



1939

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their vehicle is now in good shape and won't let them down anytime soon. But why are so many shops falling behind at the customer level? There are several reasons:

REPAIR SHOP OWNERS PUT THE WRONG PEOPLE IN FRONT OF CUSTOMERS

I've known and worked with outstanding technicians, men with the hands of surgeons and the minds of physicists... who also couldn't complete a sentence without a brace of four-letter words. These techs are an asset to any shop, but only if they're working on vehicles or supervising the operation, not working with customers. Many declare that they can't afford a dedicated service writer. Even if this is true, if an employee can't communicate effectively with a customer, they shouldn't be dealing with them directly. Jobbers and W/Ds confront this problem up front since their customer-facing personnel are the core of the business, not back in the bays. As such, they are ideally placed to help their service shops not only understand the implications of effective customer service but also to incorporate it in their business through effective employee training.

MANY SHOP OWNERS DON'T GIVE EMPLOYEES THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

Automotive service is a journeyman trade; if you want to work, you bring your own tools. The same is true of the skills needed for effective customer service. To do it well, a service writer or tech needs customer service tools, training that they won't get in their apprenticeship program. The owner must fill this training gap, but too many don't or won't. It's not because of lack of programs...major distributors like Uni-Select have multiple training opportunities available to installers, but too few take advantage of the programs. You as a jobber or W/D can help your customers understand the importance of these tools, and will benefit in the long run.

MANY SHOP OWNERS DON'T UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OWNERSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT

Anyone who has spent a lifetime and taken serious financial risk to launch and grow a business has a major incentive to keep customers happy. Paid staff has a risk that's purely proportional to their stake in the enterprise...which is substantially lower. A customer-facing employee who isn't looking at the books each month can't and won't make the correlation between taking care of customers and the bottom line. This isn't a criticism, it is human nature. To fix this, there would have to be an incentive system for great customer service, which is rarely seen in the automotive or any other retail business. Few repair shops follow up with consumers to find out what needs correcting. There's no prize for making a customer less unhappy. Like jobbers

and W/Ds however, it is possible to track purchase frequency. If customers don't come back, something's wrong. This requires that the owner/manager use software that can track and separate regular customers and one-timers and ideally correlate them to average size of the invoice. It's possible to offer terrific satisfaction in major repairs, but disappoint in regular maintenance, for example. And who has experience in using this kind of tracking software? Their jobber! It's a call too few shops make.

IT'S A THANKLESS JOB

The vast majority of technicians enter the trade because they love the challenge of diagnosing and working with vehicles. Very few do so because they love working with customers more than they enjoy working on their cars. I've yet to meet a tech or service writer who enjoys spending eight or nine hours a day telling people that their repair will take longer and cost more than they expected. I've often thought that selling chocolate or women's shoes must be the opposite; people have a reason to smile when they leave the building. Not so auto repair. There are a few service writers who love their work, but they're like diamonds: damned hard to find and usually the result of a great deal of shaping and polishing. Successful, busy shops need dedicated service writers, but where do they fit inside the shop's social hierarchy? In many shops, they're definitely below the techs in the pecking order, unless this task is rotated among the technicians. Unfortunately, this often results in poorly paid service writers who have a weak understanding of the repair. It shouldn't be necessary, for example, to call in a tech to explain what rotor and pads are...and a poor understanding of automotive technology makes the difficult, expensive transaction even more awkward for both parties. Again, jobbers and W/Ds can offer a wide variety of training options through Uni-Select to your customer which is just as valuable as the point-of-purchase merchandising support you already offer.

The difficulty in finding the right people for critical customer service positions isn't unique to the vehicle service industry: jobbers and W/Ds have the same problem and almost everyone can recount several recent poor customer service experiences, across every segment from food service to government, so it's a widespread problem. In our industry however, it can make the difference between business success and failure. Winning shops know this but too many don't...and resources to correct the problem are at the other end of the telephone, at the same place they buy their parts. It's up to us to encourage shop owners to take advantage of those resources.

Jim Anderton is the long-time technical editor of SSGM Magazine and a respected industry speaker on automotive customer service and automotive repair.

WHERE IS THE AFTERMARKET GOING?

AN AGING VEHICLE POPULATION MEANS PARTS, SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

BY TOM VENETIS

The annual (Automotive Aftermarket Products Expo) AAPEX show in Las Vegas is not only an opportunity to see the newest automotive technologies and services, it is also an opportunity to understand the trends that will impact independent service providers and aftermarket parts makers over the next several years.

David Portalatin, executive director of Industry Analysis with The NPD Group Inc. said his company's most recent survey of consumer trends suggests the continued uncertainty surrounding the economic recovery is still making itself felt in how people are spending disposable income. While there are signs that consumers are growing more optimistic about the overall economy, they are still reluctant to spend too freely because they are worried about their personal economic security.

"But consumers do expect to spend more on gasoline, vehicle repair and vehicle purchases than they were a year ago," Portalatin added.

This is to be expected as many vehicle owners cut back on vehicle maintenance for the last four years and there is now pent-up demand that will make itself felt in the independent aftermarket. Vehicle maintenance can only be postponed for so long.

Another trend that will play into the upward pressure on vehicle maintenance spending is the growing age of the vehicle fleet. Portalatin said while new vehicle sales

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will rise, the numbers will never reach the 17 million vehicle sales per year that was common before this recent recession.

"The reality is that even if we sell 15 million new cars this year, there are still 47 million vehicles on the road right now, so the reality is that the vast majority of Americans are going to drive the same car next year as they did in 2012," he added.

Mark Seng, vice-president, Aftermarket and Commercial Vehicle Solutions for Polk said the average age of vehicles "stands at about 11.3 years right now."

This growing number of 10 year-old-plus vehicles on the road tells an important change in the consumer's feeling about older vehicles. Driven by a growing economy and easy credit and financing options, many pre-recession vehicle owners were quick to dump their cars after a few years of ownership to purchase or lease a new vehicle. Few people were interested in investing in an older vehicle.

"We need (as an industry) to focus on this eight-to-ten-year-old-plus segment of the vehicle market as consumers have now started to re-evaluate how they feel about that ten-year-old vehicle," Portalatin said. "Where five years ago, (consumers) would not have invested in such a vehicle, they are now willing to do so ... so the eight-to-ten-year-old vehicle cohort will become the largest vehicle cohort out there on the road. We now have a segment of consumers who will invest in their older vehicles. We will need to identify who these people are and what their needs are, as they will become the major source of aftermarket growth for the next several years."

INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

What is unique about this cohort of vehicle owners is while they are careful with how they are spending their dollars – worried as they are about their personal economic situations and the overall economy – when they

are going to spend dollars on their vehicles, they want to make sure they are getting the most for those investments. They are looking for quality parts and services that will add value to their vehicle and keep it on the road.

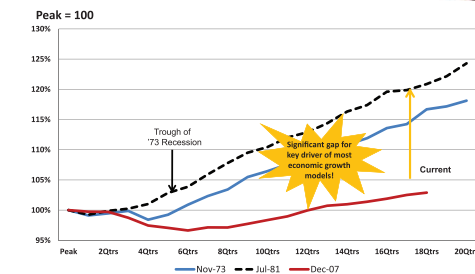
"These vehicle owners are much more likely to do more frequent maintenance, they will use fuel additives, premium motor oils and other premium automotive products," Portalatin added. "Premium means offering greater value on that part, oil or additive. It has to last longer, perform better and keep the value of the vehicle."

One of the more interesting discussions at this year's AAPEX show is the impact of the Millennial Generation on the aftermarket. This group, born between the early 1980s to the early 2000s, has been much commented on recently, specifically for how they are impacting vehicle sales and long-term vehicle ownership. One worrying trend for the automotive industry is this generation is expressing very little interest in owning a vehicle. Millennials' feelings of economic uncertainty, especially with many holding down high student debt loans and looking at poor job prospects, is making many turn away from wanting to own

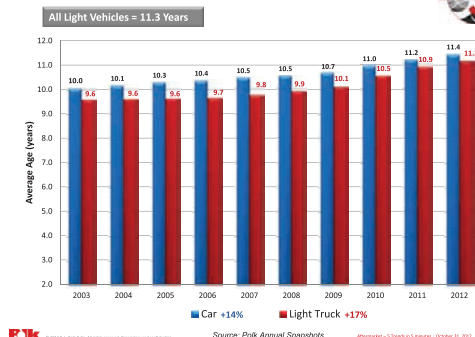
or maintain a vehicle. However, surveys done by several research firms show that this generation, when some of them do go out and purchase a car, tends to overwhelmingly purchase a used, older vehicle. And that buying group does say they are willing to spend good dollars on premium aftermarket parts to keep the vehicle running, and send their business to independent service providers to install those parts.

"It is no longer true that a thirteen-year-old car is looking for an exit to the junk yard," Portalatin added. "People are now willing to spend money on keeping that car on the road, more than ever before. And these under-thirty-five-year-old vehicle owners are going to become a significant and important part of the aftermarket."

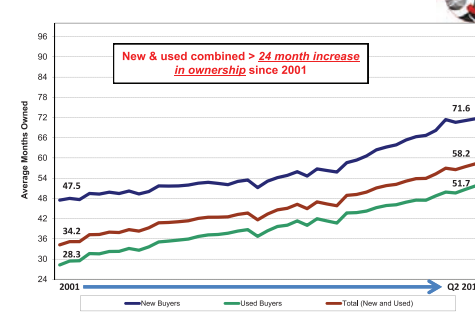
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BY TOM VENETIS

GOODBYE COPPER

NEW LAWS LOOK TO DO AWAY WITH COPPER AND REGULATE OTHER COMPOUNDS IN BRAKE FORMULATIONS

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New laws being passed in California and Washington State will permanently change friction formulations for cars and light-duty vehicles over the next 15-20 years.

Known as 'Better Brake Laws,' California and Washington State are proposing to reduce the use of toxic materials in automotive brake pads and shoes. The materials to be governed are a combination of heavy metals and copper.

The new laws have broad industry support, with the Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association through the Brake Manufacturers Association and the Heavy Duty Brake Manufacturers Association working closely with state legislators to develop the laws.

A QUICK LOOK AT THE LAWS

The Washington State Department of Ecology website (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/betterbrakes.html>) offers a useful summary of the major provisions of the law for the state. But the bottom line is this:



Brake pads and shoes manufactured after January 1, 2015, must not contain asbestos, hexavalent chromium, mercury, cadmium or lead. Auto shops and other distributors of brakes will be able to sell any existing inventory for ten years.



Brake pads manufactured after January 1, 2021, must not contain more than five per cent copper by weight.

The law in California is largely the same, except for some differences in the timing of when copper has to be eliminated from friction formulations. What is key is the regulation and eventual near elimination of copper from brake friction formulations.

Ian Wesley, better brake rule coordinator, Wash-

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ington State Department of Ecology, Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction says the laws in Washington State and in California came about in an effort to

reduce harmful metals and copper from entering the watershed, as well as streams and rivers. High levels of copper are known to cause damage to fragile aquatic ecosystems and fish. A study in Ecological Applications finds small amounts of copper in water can cause the deadening of a salmon's sense of smell which makes this fish more susceptible to certain kinds of predators, as smell is the salmon's means of detecting them.

Cities to the south of San Francisco found that they were having difficulty reducing the levels of copper coming from urban runoff entering San Francisco Bay, and studies undertaken in both states discovered that dust produced when braking is one of several sources of copper showing up in the runoff.

"The Brake Pad Partnership in California spent a decade researching the link between pollution and copper coming from brakes," Wesley adds. "They concluded that a little bit less than half of the copper entering San Francisco bay is coming from brake pads; and we have estimates here (for Puget Sound) that are just a little bit lower. Either way, brake pads count for a significant source of copper."

The Brake Pad Partnership, made up of representatives from the automotive industry, friction manufacturers, environmental groups, storm water agencies and representatives of coastal cities, proposed that the most effective means of tackling the copper problem was a gradual, phased-in reduction of copper used in brake friction materials.

Ann Wilson, senior vice-president of government affairs for the Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association says "one of our primary issues, as we represent manufacturers of brake materials, is that we have sufficient time to work with our entire customer base — aftermarket and OE makers — to make sure there is an adequate supply of brake material out there."

HOW WILL COPPER BE PHASED OUT?

Washington State's Department of Ecology and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, along with brake friction manufacturers, all agreed to develop a common set of reliable test methods for determining the concentrations of copper and the levels of the other materials to be regulated. The testing method agreed to is SAE 2975 and this testing will be used by the friction manufacturers to self-certify compliance with the laws of the two states.

NSF International (nsf.org) has been charged with helping friction manufacturers show they are compliant



with the new state regulations, having the support of brake producers, the Brake Manufacturers Council (BMS) and the Automotive Aftermarket Suppliers Association and the Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association. Bob Frayer, director of Engineering Laboratories and Automotive Aftermarket Certification Programs with NSF International, says friction

manufacturers selling into Washington State will first submit their current friction products to NSF International to establish a baseline of the materials used in brake products. The date for that is January 1, 2013.

"The baseline data is to give the state a snapshot of the materials that are currently out there, and the percentages of the materials," adds Dave Schenk, engineer with NSF International. "Those baselines will be used to monitor that the materials are being reduced in accord with the timeline."

The Brake Manufacturers Council, in an effort to help consumers know that the brakes they are putting on their vehicles are in compliance with the new regulations, created a new set of trademarks called LeafMarks. These will be visible on brake packaging and on the brakes themselves, and NSF International has been granted the right to authorize the use of the LeafMark to manufacturers in compliance with the testing standards.

The LeafMark has three leaves:

Level "A" regulates cadmium, chromium, lead, mercury and asbestos.

Level "B" is the same as A but copper must be less than 5 weight per cent.

Level "N" is the same as B but copper must be less than 0.5 weight per cent.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE AFTERMARKET?

Major aftermarket brake makers and suppliers say they are enthusiastic about the new regulations and have already started developing new friction formulations to sell under the new regulations for Washington State and California. All say the new friction materials will meet the same performance specifications as today's friction materials, specifically in the areas of low noise, dust and heat distribution.

All the friction makers also say that while the regulations are for Washington State and California, the brake materials made for those states will be available nationwide. The same will happen with aftermarket brake products with all new products conforming to the new regulations regardless of where the products are sold.

CANADIAN SHOP WINS AAIA'S HEAD OF CLASS AWARD!



Kevin and Stacey Gustafson

Uni-Select would like to congratulate Gustafson's Auto Clinic Inc. in Athabasca, AB for being the first Canadian shop to win the prestigious "Head of Class" award, which annually honours up to six companies in the automotive aftermarket who invest in employee education and training. This award is presented by AIA's American counterpart, the Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association.

"We are really honoured to receive this award and feel privileged to have been recognized," said Stacey Gustafson, who owns the shop with her husband Kevin. "We've worked hard over the last few years to change the way we do business (...) and it's really paying off!" *

Gustafson's Auto Clinic Inc. is part of the SAX program, and works closely with their Uni-Select member, Automotive

Parts Distributors (Edmonton, AB) to upgrade its staff's technical, management and customer service skills and continues to do so to the benefit of the business.

"In this industry it is important to continually upgrade ones skills to keep a competitive edge and to provide clients with the quality of service they deserve" said Marc Brazeau, president of AIA Canada. "Gustafson's has set a great example through their commitment to training and is well deserving of this award."*

Gustafson's Auto Clinic Inc. received its award at the annual AAPEX Conference in Las Vegas! Congratulations!

*From AIA press release- October 9, 2012, Ottawa



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BY CHRIS TALBOT

MANAGING AND MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES

NOT AS DIFFICULT AS IT SOUNDS

Former General Electric CEO Jack Welch had what he knew was the secret to effectively managing employees.

"If you pick the right people and give them the opportunity to spread their wings – and put compensation as a carrier behind it – you almost don't have to manage them," he once remarked. Welch made management sound easy. So why is that so many business owners and managers have such a difficult time attracting, motivating and keeping top talent?

One of the reasons is that managers or business owners frequently focus on the middle part of that quote. Nobody can deny monetary compensation is an important element of an employee's work life, but most of us might be surprised to learn it has consistently fallen far down on the "Top 10" lists of things that employees say motivate them. According to Greg Weatherdon, an experienced entrepreneur and motivational speaker who regularly speaks with organizations about how to "get more life" out of their businesses, managing employees takes time, effort and an understanding of the employee mindset. But really, proper management begins even before a new

employee joins the team – before you even start collecting resumes, actually.

Hire right ... the first time

An employee that doesn't fit in with your organization or its culture is not only difficult to manage; it's an impossible situation. Like Welch, Weatherdon knows the secret to effective management begins with effective hiring.

Good hiring techniques aren't about advertising for a list of technical qualifications or credentials, but instead a list of the traits and behaviours that will mesh with the culture and set the potential employee up for success, he said. Hiring is never easy, but finding the right person for the job takes time, effort and patience.

If you're hiring the right people, you can get more out of them because they're happy in their job, said Jay Forte, performance coach, author, speaker and president of Humanetrics LLC.

"You have to hire well so you don't waste all of your



©Stefano Lunardi/iStockphoto/Thinkstock

time trying to drag somebody into better performance who just doesn't want to do it, anyway," Forte said.

It's all about R-E-S-P-E-C-T

If money isn't the top employee motivator (it's usually around number six on every list over the last 30 years), then what is? Aretha Franklin sang about it, and if managers want to better motivate their employees, they should get used to giving it. Of critical importance to employee motivation and happiness in any job is respect and appreciation.

Simply getting to know employees on a somewhat personal level, asking them about their long-term goals, working with them to achieve goals for their own betterment and the success of the company, and doing something as simple as saying "good job" goes a long way towards motivating them. A happy employee is a productive employee, after all.

Merge Gupta-Sunderji, a leadership expert, recommends managers schedule 30-minute one-on-one coffee meetings with employees to chat, allowing the employee to lead the conversation. It's a simple gift of time,

which she said is a huge motivator. Simple and genuine communication goes a long way.

Create a culture of education

Education and training, whether it's formal instruction or more informal on-the-job training, may seem like a daunting and expensive element of a business, but it's another great motivating factor in good management techniques.

Managers are frequently concerned any training they provide will be an opportunity for the employee to seek greener pastures, but that's not the way owners should look at it, said Bob Greenwood, AAM, president and CEO of Automotive Aftermarket E-Learning Centre. Instead, look at it as an investment that keeps employees engaged, improving their work and, ultimately, creating a better customer experience.

"The employer has got to understand education is an investment, and that is something so many do not acknowledge," Greenwood said.

Another unfortunate aspect of education and training is most businesses simply do not allocate enough of a budget, Greenwood said. Even if that budget is available, though, employees have to be motivated to continue their training, whether it's learning more about the business or taking courses to upgrade their skills. Owners have to foster a culture of learning within the business, Weatherdon said. That also means providing the means to learn during work hours. It's incredibly demotivating to expect employees to take courses and upgrade their skills on their own time without compensation, he said. It's even worse to expect them to pay for it out of their pockets.

Embrace the traits of a good manager

Walk the walk, talk the talk and learn to roll up your sleeves and get your hands dirty when push comes to shove. It may be a jumble of clichés, but they're all traits of a good manager – one who not only keeps employees focused, but drives efficiencies and helps to create a friendly, fun work atmosphere.

There are a number of traits a good manager possesses, including being personally interested in their people, a good listener and communicator, driven and focused, a good worker, as well as possessing self-discipline and perseverance.

Not everyone is born with these skills, and some will need to spend more time cultivating these disciplines than others to be truly effective in managing employees and motivating them to peak efficiency. In the end, though, when the right people are in the right jobs in the right company, employees will take the initiative and help drive your company's success.



LIQUID ASSETS

UNI-SELECT'S OE FLUIDS SOLUTION BRINGS OE-CLASS PRODUCTS WITHIN REACH FOR JOBBERS

BY ANDREW BROOKS

The Uni-Select OE Fluids Solution, which markets products developed by Beck/Arnley, addresses the expanding niche occupied by coolants, transmission fluids and motor oils marketed by manufacturers of foreign nameplate vehicles in North America. It's a growing market, with foreign nameplates accounting for fully 40 per cent of the vehicles on US and Canadian roads. The Canadian figure has been stable but the much larger US market is seeing a rapid rise in foreign nameplates; not long ago the US figure was around 30 per cent.

The Beck/Arnley program has three components: an extensive range of coolants, an equally extensive range of transmission fluids and a smaller but targeted offering of motor oil and power steering fluid. The program is a logical extension of Beck/Arnley's premium quality parts for foreign nameplate vehicles, says Tom Fritsche, director of product management for Beck/Arnley.

Part of the reason the market is so attractive is that with the increasing sophistication of vehicles today, manufacturers are very careful about issuing unique sets of specifications for each model, with the result that instead of a one-size-fits-all coolant, now each vehicle requires its own unique formulation. Hence there is a wide and ever-expanding range of coolants on the market. Each has a unique colour, to improve ease of use and to reduce misapplication.

The products in Beck/Arnley's OE Fluids Solution program are sourced from the same vendors who provide the branded products to the OEMs. They even follow the

same colour scheme to make recognition easier and to reinforce the important message that these are truly the same products, even though they may bear the Beck/Arnley logo and not the imprint of the vehicle OEMs.

When we spoke with Gilles Michaud, vice-president, product and market development for Uni-Select Canada, the coolant line had just been extended with the addition of three fluids for European nameplates. "This is a first for us," he says. "It's very unusual to find these on the market except by going to an OE car dealership. Not a lot of people offer the OE coolant. And we're very specific with make, model and year, so no matter what vehicle you drive we can offer a product that's specific to it."

The European coolants join Beck/Arnley's line of four coolants for Asian nameplates, which have been on the market for a year and a half.

The Beck/Arnley philosophy is to provide an OE type offering. "With these products we don't have the name of the car manufacturer on the label, but we do have the same

product," Fritsche says. He adds that technicians like the option of being able to use the same product as what's in the car already. This is also a major advantage in collision work, another target market for the OE Fluids Solution program. Lowballing on price isn't the main objective here, but price isn't unimportant: the goal is to provide a positive quality/price ratio.

MINDSHARE

There's a psychological aspect in play too. On import vehicles in particular people pay a lot of attention to the colour of the fluid already in the vehicle. "If it's not the same colour a lot of people won't accept it, because they think it might not be the exact same fluid as what they have in their cooling system," Michaud says. "But we can give them the same colour. When the coolant reservoir is opened, our product matches the colour in there. People have more confidence that it's the same product."

The second major program category is automatic transmission fluids. "Every company has designed their transmission uniquely – they're all different. And they want to have the ability to provide the fluid that fits that specific transmission." Today Beck/Arnley has six different transmission fluids on offer. A product for Continuously Variable Transmissions (CVTs) will be added soon.

Like most vehicle systems, today's transmissions are steadily becoming more sophisticated. "You have five-, six-, seven-speed units – we're coming to eight-speed now," Fritsche says. "The requirements for each may be different, and the fluid's been designed to meet those requirements. Today's technicians look in their manuals or their Mitchell or the owner's manual to get the exact specific requirements for that vehicle, and they want to install the same type of fluid. The same can be said for the coolants too. It's not always easily available on the market. I'm not saying it's unavailable, but in most cases it's not as specific as they want. We have that solution for them."

The third, smaller part of the program consists of an OE power steering fluid and a 0W-20 motor oil. Beck/Arnley opted to come out with a 0W-20 oil because it's increasingly being mandated by OEMs for their newer vehicles, and as it was initially slow to enter the market

there was a gap to be filled. "We went that way to make sure we were ready," Fritsche says. "As Beck/Arnley has the oil filters on the market, it made sense for us to be able to supply the motor oil that was missing from the offerings of some of the suppliers."

The development of the OE Fluids Solution program in large part reflects the fact that with longer lasting vehicles and components, maintenance is taking a larger slice

of the service repertoire. The parts trade of course will continue to be a mainstay for Beck/Arnley, but the importance of fluids within the maintenance envelope is also increasingly recognized by OEMs, who are today much more stringent about fluid replacement and maintenance schedules.

To support its members and advocate for the adoption of the OE Fluids Solution, Uni-Select has a sales manager dedicated to the program and a sales agency that oversees knowledge transfer to the jobber community. Beck/Arnley has also produced a factsheet that highlights the impact of coolant on the water pumps in today's vehicles – a critical area of competence for jobbers as materials science continues to make inroads in vehicle manufacture.

"Today most water pumps are aluminum, as are the radiators found in today's vehicles, so you need some specific additives in coolant to protect these components from degrading," Fritsche says. "That's why the coolants in our new program have special additive packages to do what they do with specific attention to the unique metallurgy that's been employed to make these components."

Beck/Arnley has also created a gallery of videos to showcase all of their products, explaining what makes them unique and how they dovetail with the design requirements and specifications set out by the OE vehicle makers.

The program has been a success, Michaud says. Those who have promoted the OE Fluids Solution have been successful with it, he says, but more remains to be done. "It's a change in the mentality of a jobber store because we never used to have so many of these fluids. So there's an education process involved."

"People are used to offering the same coolant and transmission fluid that they've always offered. We have to remind ourselves to offer customers the products that have been designed for their specific make and model. It'll take time to get the word out, and we've found that once people are aware of it, they want it."





SELLING THE BENEFITS OF PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE

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FOR AFTERMARKET INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE, IT'S TIME TO START TALKING.


BY NOELLE STAPINSKY

With today's vehicles being built better, lasting longer and incorporating an intense amount of high-end technologies, it's vital that service shops transition from traditional breakdown and repair service providers to professional diagnostics and maintenance specialists. And who better to help them cultivate such change, than the jobbers and counterpeople who engage in a daily dialogue with shops?

Specializing in preventative maintenance is the name of the game, creating a whole new business model that – by counseling consumers on preventative maintenance and overall vehicle health – will help jobbers and technicians alike grow and improve their businesses.

In Canada, there are many older vehicles – eight-years-old and older – on the road than ever before.

And according to the Canadian Automotive Aftermarket Demand Study, prepared by DesRosiers Automotive Consultants for the Automotive Industries Association (AIA), the aftermarket parts and services industry was worth \$18.49 billion in 2010, but the aftermarket missed out on \$11 billion in unperformed maintenance opportunities, which would have bumped parts and

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services up to a \$30 billion industry.

Similarly in the US – where the average age of vehicles is about 10 years old – underperformed maintenance grew to US\$62 billion in 2010 compared to US\$54 billion the previous year, representing US\$8 billion in missed maintenance opportunities, according to the Aftermarket Automotive Suppliers Association's (AASA) Automotive Aftermarket Status Report.

"Statistics say that thirty per cent of people need their vehicles for work. It's a critical tool for their livelihood," says Gilles Michaud, vice-president of product and market development for Uni-Select. "Vehicles are built better and lasting longer, and while components may not need to be replaced, maintenance around those components needs to be taken care of."

As the trend in the industry seems to indicate that visits to service shops are down close to 30 per cent compared to a few years ago, it's time for service shops to get serious about developing preventative maintenance programs.

Far too many shop owners and service advisors are afraid to ask questions in fear of customer's thinking they're trying to upsell on services. But the greatest tool shops have at their disposal is the OE regular maintenance specifications. "Customers have all of this information in the owner's manual, but who reads those," laughs Michaud.

By accessing vehicle maintenance information through Mitchell, ALLDATA, or Uni-Select's ASP Central Point system, shops can inform their customers of upcoming or current required maintenance, and easily create a customized service schedule to keep customers rolling through the bay doors.

When a customer visits a shop on those rare two to three visits per year, the service provider should have a basic inspection in place to check components that wear frequently or degrade over time. It's usually standard practice to check brakes, but what about windshield wipers, filters, the myriad of fluids or timing components and sensors? Uni-Select offers such inspection programs that are well designed and easy to explain to the consumer.

Having an open dialogue with the customer will help shops develop a trusting professional relationship, while educating the customer about the overall

health of their vehicle.

Jobbers need to talk to technicians about doing such inspections with every customer that comes in. Inspections can be packaged with something as simple as an oil change. Such a simple step reminds vehicle owners that it is more cost-effective and easier to maintain a vehicle than it is to fix it.

Uni-Select offers its members a number of educational and program options to help customers with their businesses. The preventative maintenance Instant Inspection Diagnostics brochure, for example, offers a comprehensive look at transmission fluids, motor oil, brake and power steering fluids, tires, brake pads, air filters, wiper blades, belts, hoses, and coolant and battery inspections. This vast wealth of maintenance-specific information and vehicle maintenance schedules can be used to educate customers about the importance of preventative maintenance.

To help shops send out maintenance notices, Uni-Select offers MechanicNet in Canada and Customer Link in the US. As one executive put it, "Shops need to become more like dentists and start pre-booking customer visits. The car dealerships have invested a lot of time and effort to be and look more professional. Independents need to mirror that image."

What's not surprising is that about 75 per cent of all service visits are initiated by the customer, who might call to schedule a repair or service, or just show up. By having a regular maintenance program and inspection service in place, shops can not only better manage the overall health of the vehicles, but also help save their customers money, while keeping them safe out on the road.

Shops that have shifted into a maintenance and vehicle health-counseling role have built a more loyal and educated customer base. And with such resources as OE recommendations and informative tools supplied by Uni-Select jobbers, they have the entire backup they need to justify their service assessments.

The industry is changing quickly and aftermarket professionals need to act fast. The jobbers and counterpeople have the biggest relationship with the shop owners, and to ease such a transition, Uni-Select believes that jobbers are the agents of change and can help shop owners with this new business trend, while tapping into some of the billions of dollars worth of underperformed maintenance.

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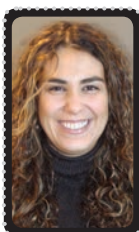


E-COMMERCE

is changing the face of how we do business!

Is it worth getting your customers on board?

BY AIDA BENZAKOUR
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS,
UNI-SELECT CANADA



To truly understand the benefits of e-commerce, think of your own purchasing behavior when you are the customer! If you have already purchased a product online, then you know that the factors that influenced your decision were probably along the lines of:

- You trusted the company.
- It provided the convenience you needed, whether it was to save time by not going physically to a shop or spending time on the phone, or because you took advantage of some promotion; or even because the site made it easy for you to find what you were looking for.

And if your experience was a positive one, then you will most likely repeat it!

Your customers have a similar reality: they value time, they value trust and they value EASY; especially where their business is concerned.

We are living in the age of information. The use of the web has changed the way we connect and do business and we must realize that it won't revert back to what it used to be. Rather, it will take an increasingly bigger role in our lives. You must know that in our industry, it has become a norm rather than a nice to have. What differentiates you from your competition? In essence, you sell similar products at a similar price, right? It's all about speed, ease of doing business, access to quick product and price information both online and in their shop! That's what will win you those sales **FROM** the competition!

As a business owner, you know that when you meet these requirements, you're closer to ensuring yourself some loyalty – which is no luxury these days!

Now from your perspective, it has its perks, because



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when we talk about making business easy, we mean that it will be for you too!

Lower cost:

Just consider your cost per transaction...how much does every sale cost you in terms of human and paper resources? It is a known fact: an online transaction will be cheaper for you than one through traditional channels.

Fast and accurate:

Reduces if not eliminates the risk of processing errors – making your efforts more efficient!

Operational optimization:

It allows for better buying decisions and more opportunities for buying alternate products. Your customers can buy more, diverse products anytime they wish – good for you, right?

With Uni-Select, you can provide e-commerce solutions to your customers that will help you achieve all that, whether it is through ASP Central Point or DAVE! And now you can even customize those platforms to include your logo, therefore increasing your visibility and making that connection with your customers that much stronger!

Sources: Management study guide, <http://www.management-studyguide.com/e-commerce-advantages.htm>; Exclusive ecommerce.com, <http://www.exclusive-ecommerce.com/advantages-ecommerce-reviewed.html>

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