



AUTOMOTIVE TRAINING INTERNATIONAL

ARE YOU REALLY A MANAGER?

By: Tyler Robbins

In my role as a Fixed Operations Trainer, Facilitator and Consultant, I spend a considerable amount of time working with Managers/Directors as well as, of course, Dealers, General Managers, etc.

In several past articles, I've discussed the role of Manager within the dealership, and in short, to cut to the meat of the matter, I will sum up any Managers role in a single line:

"A Manager is responsible to grow the business!"

This applies to every Manager, not just Service Managers, and yes, that includes General Managers and Dealer Principals too!

Therefore a Service Manager has the responsibility to improve the Service Departments' overall profitability and performance, which obviously includes all of the associated elements that would make up that improvement, such as growing the staff, marketing, expense control, etc.

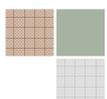
So, it is the responsibility then of General Managers and Dealers, who have the responsibility of growing the entire operation, to develop the departmental managers.

So as Manager.....

- ✓ What "development" have you received?
- ✓ Have you been taught how to grow your operation?
- ✓ Have you been given the tools to grow your operation?
- ✓ Do you even have the authority to grow your operation?



That last question, "Do you even have the authority" lies at the heart of this article.





Many Managers, especially newer managers are placed on a “short leash” so to speak, in that the Dealer/GM doesn’t afford them much autonomy to make big or even little decisions.

Let me give you a few examples:

Without the approval of the GM or the Dealer:

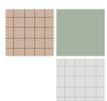
- A Service Manager CANNOT buy a new hoist/lift
- A Service Manager CANNOT hire staff
- A Service Manager CANNOT do any advertising
- A Service Manager CANNOT fire anyone
- A Service Manager CANNOT buy a Software program
- A Service Manager CANNOT make deals with Vendors that involve contracts
- A Service Manager CANNOT acquire outside Training
- A Service Manager CANNOT change the hours of operation
- A Service Manager CANNOT make facility changes
- A Service Manager CANNOT get a new phone

HOWEVER, there are a few things that a Service Manager CAN do without getting prior approval:

- A Service Manager CAN order more toilet paper (So can the Lot Boy)
- A Service Manager CAN say NO to a Vendor (So can the Lot Boy)
- A Service Manager CAN say NO to acquiring outside training (So can the Lot Boy)
- A Service Manager CAN say NO to acquiring advertising (So can the Lot Boy)
- A Service Manager CAN say NO to just about anything (So can the Lot Boy)

The sarcasm is obvious, but there is a lot to be learned from these statements. We identified that a lot of this list applies to newer Managers, and certainly, no dealer would sign off on a blank check-book to a brand new Manager without first giving them some guidance, and becoming confident in that Managers’ ability to make sound decisions, right?

So since we know, it is responsibility of the GM/Dealer to teach them how to make sound decisions, and remember, the underlying factor in any decision is growth, so in teaching the Manager, the GM/Dealers instruct Managers to “build a case” or “develop an ROI statement” with actual facts and figures.





So, full of enthusiasm, this new Manager goes off and puts on paper an ROI statement to build their case. Now it's funny really, because most GM/Dealers don't actually "teach" the Managers how to do this, (if they even know how to) so the Manager returns with his version, which is naturally more "enthusiasm" than facts, and because of this, and it doesn't seem to matter how much or how little the decision will cost, the GM/Dealer says "No", just as they were taught when they were departmental Managers!

The real challenge here is not the new Manager; the real challenge is what the new Manager has learned from this experience and then applies first hand as he/she becomes more experienced.

Firstly, the Manager doesn't learn how to develop a more effective ROI statement, they just assume that the proposal simply didn't have the appropriate ROI. They have learned however, that unless the Manager-calculated ROI is a greater percentage than the last proposal, it's not worth the effort to go to the GM/Dealer because the answer will be "No". So the next "proposal" presented to the GM/Dealer isn't actually any better, it just has a different "enthusiasm-ROI" factor, and the GM/Dealer will say "No" again.

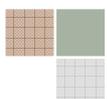
Over time, the Manager hears "No" more than "Yes", so his proposals to the GM/Dealer become less and less and reaches a point that the GM/Dealer believes that the Manager is "finally-confident" because they don't "propose-to-a-No" anymore. The GM/Dealer believes that the new Manager is finally able to drop the prefix of "new" and is a seasoned and effective Manager! Yeah right.

Think about it, isn't that the same way the GM learned when he was a departmental Manager too?

This Manager isn't effective at all, in fact, I will say that they don't "Manage" whatsoever, as they do not have the power or authority to make decisions to grow the business!

We know that Fixed Operations has the absorption responsibility for the entire dealership, and forgetting about everything else for a moment – Decisions and opportunities to grow the business in Fixed then must be of vital importance to the Dealer/Owner/GM , right?

Well, unless the Service Manager or any Manager for that matter is in the GM/Dealers office asking for something, then those opportunities are being stonewalled at the Service Managers office and the GM/Dealer won't ever have to worry about them making wrong decisions, they aren't making any decisions that will actually grow the business!





Just out of morbid curiosity, when was the last time YOUR GM/Dealer said “Yes”?

How could they, they learned to say NO too, from the GM/Dealer before them.

So the BIG Question, are you really a Manager comes down to the heart of this article in that, honestly, if you cannot say “yes” are you really a Manager? And that goes for Dealers/GM’s too, if you don’t give Managers the authority to say “yes”, are you really managing them?

If you’re not developing and growing to say “Yes”, then realistically, go get the Lot Boy a tie, he can say “no” to anyone too!



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