



AUTOMOTIVE TRAINING INTERNATIONAL

TENURE VS TALENT By: Tyler Robbins

I can't tell you how many times I've heard Service Managers, General Managers or Dealers say to me; a good service advisor is worth his/her weight in gold.

In today's retail Fixed Operations world, I would wholeheartedly agree that a Good, especially a Great Service Advisor IS worth their weight in gold.

That statement leads naturally to ask "What makes a Service Advisor Great?"

- ✓ Is it their knowledge?
- ✓ Is it their attitude?
- ✓ Is it their time spent doing it?

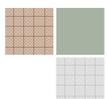
Before we go too far; let's very simply define some basic terms, so we know the differences.

Competence: Knowing how to perform the required function.

Tenure: How long one has performed the required function.

Talent: Performing the required function **exceptionally.**

The position of a Service Advisor is an 'always on your toes' kind of position with many responsibilities, however, those responsibilities or functions can be summarized into the following list.





Realizing that competence is knowing “how” to perform a function, ask yourself, how long it actually takes for a service advisor to learn “how” to perform the following functions: (not how well, but how to)

1. To write, update and close repair orders?
2. To navigate through the in-house computer system?
3. To write an accurate estimate of repairs?
4. To hand out repair orders to a dispatcher or group leader?
5. To phone customers to advise them on the findings of a technician?
6. To phone customers to advise them that their vehicle is ready?
7. To be aware and responsive to customer satisfaction?

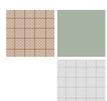
From a technically competent perspective, it really only takes one month to learn these functions, even if your new Advisor is completely new to the business. I am not suggesting that after one month that you’ve got a great advisor, but as far as the list of ‘functions’ is concerned, in one month he/she knows ‘how’ to perform them. I am merely stating that the competency required does not take a long time to learn.

If you look at the functions listed herein, half are computer-based and in today’s world, most people understand computers and picking up a simple ‘program’ realistically takes no more than a couple of days. The task of estimating and phone etiquette really only takes a couple of days of training to become competent.

The only two on the list that require the rest of the month to become competent are the dispatching, which, unless the advisor is actually doing the dispatching, takes no time at all, and of course the customer satisfaction element. The CSI element is really an on-going ever-changing training element which is really never actually completed. So with all of that being said, a Service Advisor should be competent in one month.

Remember, I am not talking about how well an Advisor performs these functions, but simply, that he or she know how to perform them.

The reality is, far too much emphasis is put on tenure and competence rather than actual talent to determine any Advisors “Gold-Weight”.





One of the biggest misconceptions in our industry is that Competence and Tenure when added together, results in a good or even a great service advisor.

We have all come across those Advisors that we would consider “Great”, so ask yourself; what made them “great”?

Was it because they had been a Service Advisor for 23 years?

Was it because they could type an RO?

Do these facts represent someone who is “Exceptional”?

Of course not.....

So why does this industry equate tenure and competence with talent?

Is it a lack of talent in ourselves?

What would happen if we actually expected “Exceptional performance” before classifying an Advisor as “good” or “great.”

Maybe a better question is: If you don’t expect exceptional performance, what do you expect?

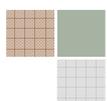
If you expect exceptional performance, are you getting it from your current advisors? You know they are competent, and their tenure is what it is, so are you prepared to demand exceptional performance?

Because this industry equates tenure and competence with talent, there is an incredible fear that if we actually expect improved performance RESULTS from these highly tenured Advisors they might quit!

Oh no!!! What if they quit?

The real reason we fear them quitting is not because they are so valuable, but moreso because we as Dealers, General Managers and Service Managers either we don’t know how, don’t have the time or are unwilling to take the time to train a new Advisors to be competent, let alone exceptional.

If you don’t know how to do it, and you consider yourself exceptional, you’re “Talent” demands that you seek out those who do know how to help you and your operation.





If you don't have the time, or are unwilling to make the time, then realistically, you're really just demonstrating your own lack of competence and frankly your lack of talent too. So really, the only attribute you bring to the table is Tenure.

If you, as a Manager, asked one of your Advisor WHY he/she considers themselves a good service advisor and they answered with: "Well, I've been an Advisor for 23 years" would you consider that an answer?

Look at it, from a non-automotive perspective, "I've been singing since the day I was born, and trust me when I tell you, I'm NOT good at it!"

Just because you have been a Service Manager for a dozen years, doesn't mean you're a good at it either!

If you are relying on the tenure and competence of your personnel for the success of your operation; who really is the UN-Talented?

Talent is what separates the best from the rest - Do you want to be the best?



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Tyler Robbins

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