

Dealing with Customer Complaints

Running a garage would be easy if it wasn't for the customers. **Andy Savva** has some tips for dealing with complaints.



ANDY SAVVA

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independent garages, I came to the realisation that in virtually every case of an unhappy customer, all that was needed to resolve the concern was to actually listen to them!

KEEP QUIET

Now, the customer isn't always right, but it's not always okay to tell them that, sometimes you have to act as if they are right. Active listening, eye contact, nodding your head in agreement, being on the same level with them, expressing empathy, and relating to how the customer is feeling can be incredibly helpful. Remember to place yourself in the customer's position or frame of mind and never patronise a customer or look for excuses. We are working in an industry where many aspects of the customer journey have to

Once you have been able to establish some rapport, you may find a mutually agreeable resolution to the problem, and you must do whatever you can to achieve this outcome. Explain to the customer what you are going to do to help the situation. It could be engaging the customer in a test drive to better understand the complaint, admitting the garage made a mistake, or if possible offering the customer a lift back home, work or a loan vehicle while you resolve their issue. You must assure at all times the customer feels that you are truly trying your best to resolve their concern and provide them with the least convenience as possible.

GARAGE VISIT

Many of us have worked in the automotive sector for

atmosphere that is different from any other garage locally and far beyond.

Keeping perspective when it comes to the customer experience will help you to create a positive customer experience and maintain a solid customer base. At Brunswick Garage we were of course never happy to receive complaints, however we used it as a prompt to better our service and if a customer made the effort to write or email us with a concern we displayed their comments in reception with the thank you letters. We wanted to show our customers that we were not perfect, but also show them we took complaints very seriously and we always aimed at achieving a positive outcome. Learning to handle challenging

Running any business, and perhaps more so a service business like an independent garage, you have to learn to recognise there are different types of customers with different expectations. How

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we deal and adapt our services the customer journey to meet and exceed these expectations are essential if we are going to succeed in having a healthy profitable business. This function must be adopted by everyone in your organisation regardless of size.

However occasionally we are faced with challenging customers who usually complain in a passively aggressive manner. These customers feel they have a reason to be upset. I always used to say to my team at Brunswick Garage, that there will always be a small percentage of customers that we will never be able to please, and importantly we must not let these handful of customers taint our view of all customers. When you find yourself having to deal with a disgruntled customer, remembering a few simple techniques can help to defuse the situation. Both parties being upset and defensive will not amount to anything positive.

In my experience running

come together, from the initial phone call to returning the customers vehicle keys, so we have to accept that sometimes things go wrong however much we try to avoid mistakes.

so long we forget what it is like to bring our vehicle for repair. Knowing what your competition is doing can also pay dividends in other ways too. It can help you set yourself apart by creating a business experience, an

customers will build respect for your business and ultimately result in higher customer retention & profits. **G**

You can find out about Andy's consultancy services by contacting: savvaautomotive.com

