

# 5 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPRESS SERVICE LANE

## Expectations Are Different Are You Keeping Up?

BY KEN ROCK

the mindset and processes required for a successful express service operation are quite different than traditional service operations. The focus for express service must always be on the customer; what is cheapest and what is most convenient for them.

The expectations for express service lanes are also different. In general, dealers should not expect an express service lane to be profitable. I'm not saying they can't be profitable, but that's not what the goal should be going in. The main reasons to offer express services are to increase customer retention and satisfaction, and to upsell customers and bring more business into your traditional service lanes.

That said, you don't want your express service business to be a losing proposition, either.

Has your dealership implemented an express service lane yet? I say 'yet' because more than half of dealerships have experimented with, or are currently operating, express service lanes. And many manufacturers are encouraging them as a customer retention tool, recommending that dealers offer free maintenance on newly purchased vehicles.

But not all service directors and managers love the idea of express service lanes. That's because

Implementing the following process tips may help to make your dealership's express service operation a success:

### 1) SEPARATE PARTS INVENTORIES

When setting up an express service lane it's critical to split those parts from the rest of your parts inventory, both physically and in your DMS.

The key to express service is "express," so the last thing you want is for your service techs to be waiting at the parts counter. Keep your fast-moving inventory in a separate location, close to the express service bay and locked up of course. An alternative is to dedicate one person in the parts department to fill just the express service parts orders.

To expedite this process, use electronic ROs. As soon as the order is written up in the service lane, a copy of the RO should print out in the parts department; no running back and forth or exchange of paper is necessary.

In your DMS, special labor ops codes can be created for this process. Express service parts should have their own source codes so you can track and price them by source. Your DMS provider should be able to help you with setting up this process.

### 2) PRICE SERVICES COMPETITIVELY

Before you set up your express service lane, conduct market research in your area. Call your local Jiffy Lube, tire shops and other independent shops to find out what they charge for the services you plan to offer. Match those prices or keep your prices very competitive.

Your dealership's main advantage when compared to independent shops is that you use OEM parts and your technicians are factory certified. Customers may be willing to pay a small premium for that advantage, but 'small' is the key word there.

Again, don't worry about making a profit on these services, especially in the beginning. Over time you may learn how to streamline your express service operations to become profitable. But the goal is to keep your existing customers happy and to attract new customers who may choose to get larger repairs done at your shop, or eventually

purchase a new vehicle.

### 3) DON'T REQUIRE APPOINTMENTS

Some customers like to make appointments and some don't. If your service department requires appointments for express services, you will lose a large percentage of potential customers.

Customers should be able to drive up without notice and get any type of express service completed in less than 60 minutes, but preferably 30 minutes.

For customers who do like to make appointments, be sure to have a self-scheduling solution. If you want to compete with independent shops, your customers should be able to schedule their own appointment using their smartphones.

### 4) TRAIN STAFF TO UPSELL

The ability to upsell is absolutely critical if you want your express services to generate revenue. The express service lane won't be profitable in and of itself, but it can generate quite a bit of revenue for the rest of your service bays.

If you're doing multi-point inspections on 100 cars, probably 90 of those ROs will have at least one recommended item. If 30 percent of those people decide to have the repair done at your dealership, that's a huge amount of new business.

Mobile tablets are great selling tools because service advisors can show customers pictures to verify worn parts, and videos to help explain features and benefits of repairs. Point-of-sale displays near the register and in the customer waiting lounge are also helpful for explaining benefits.

When upselling, electronic menus can be used to present the customers with several options at varying price points. If you give the customer only one option, it's too easy to say 'no.' If you present several options, the customer is more likely to choose one.

### 5) UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY

I've already touched on this a little, but leveraging available technology is an absolute must if you want to speed up your processes in an express



service lane.

The utilization of technology such as mobile tablets is becoming more important in terms of customer perception and speed. A clipboard and paper ROs aren't going to cut it in an express service lane.

Independent shops are being built from the ground up with technology integrated into their processes at every step of the way. If you want to compete with them, your dealership must do the same.

Technologies that I consider "must have's" for an express service operation include:

- Mobile tablets for check-ins and multi-point inspections
- Electronic ROs
- Electronic menu presentations
- Videos that explain features and benefits for common repairs
- Self-scheduling platform for customers, accessible through mobile devices
- A communications platform that enables text and/or email messaging with customers
- VIP waiting lounges with free Wi-Fi and

**"The main reasons to offer express services are to increase customer retention and satisfaction"**

Hi-Def TV screens

Express service lanes can be a winning proposition for dealership service departments. You may not make a profit on the services, but the convenience and goodwill they generate for your customers, and the upsell opportunities they present, should make them a profitable enterprise for your dealership. [CBT](#)



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