

THE MASTER TECHNICIAN'S
SERVICE REFERENCE BOOK

SESSION NO.

63-12

Customer Care

**HELPS PROTECT
THE INVESTMENT**

**MASTER TECHNICIANS SERVICE CONFERENCE
PREPARED BY CHRYSLER CORPORATION
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CUSTOMERS ARE NECESSARY . . . BUT EXPENSIVE

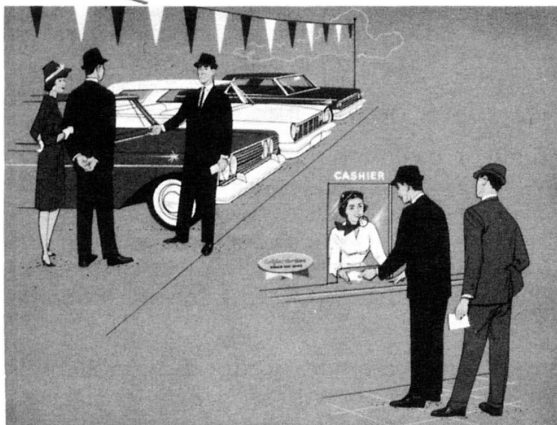


When a prospect and a salesman finally come to terms and the order for a new car is signed, it makes a very pleasant picture.



In fact, it's a scene that can't be repeated too often as far as people like us, in the sales and service end of the automobile business, are concerned—just as long as it's repeated in *our* dealership, that is!

The same thing applies when it comes to selling action out on the used-car lot . . . and customers paying their bills at the cashier's window in the service department.



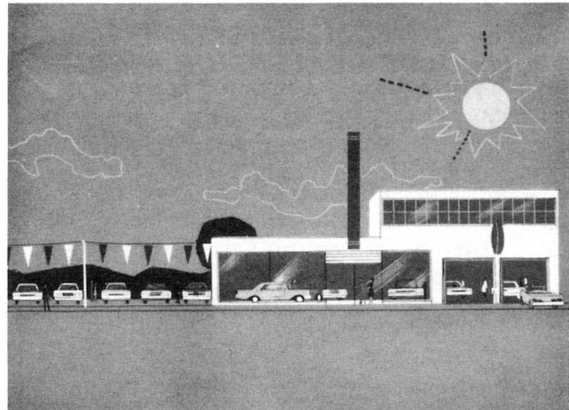
These are all things we like to see, but there is more to these activities than some of us realize . . . more behind these scenes than actually meets the eye.

Just to make it *possible* for all this selling action to take place, a whole lot of things had to happen . . . not only today, or yesterday. Some of them happened a long time ago.

IT'S A MATTER OF INVESTMENT

To begin with, there had to be an original investment in the dealership facility itself . . . with a new-car and a used-car sales department. There had to be a well-equipped service department and a well-stocked parts department.

In addition, there had to be an adequate stock of new cars on hand . . . a sales crew to sell them, along with the trade-ins. There also had to be capable technicians in the service department . . . and an office staff to handle all the paperwork and record-keeping.



Now, when you add to all that the expense of heat, lights, taxes, telephones, furniture, office equipment, supplies, advertising and sales promotion . . . just to mention some of the other items involved . . . you begin to realize a very expensive fact!

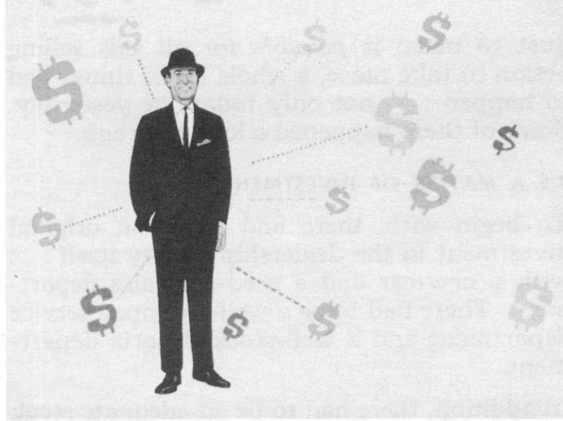
IT COSTS A PRETTY PENNY JUST TO CREATE A CUSTOMER!

Because of that, it's easy to see why every customer we have . . . in the sales department and the service department alike . . . represents quite a sizeable investment.

But there's more to it than that!

PROTECTION IS A "MUST"

Every customer represents the kind of an investment that must be protected.



This is true, not only because of the amount of time, effort and money involved in making him our customer in the first place, but for another reason that has a much more personal meaning for each one of us. And that reason is:

THE CUSTOMER IS THE SOLE SOURCE OF DEALERSHIP INCOME ... THE GREEN STUFF THAT GOES INTO MAKING UP ALL OF OUR PAYCHECKS!

However, this job of protecting the customer investment, and our own paychecks as well, is not as easy as protecting some other types of investments.

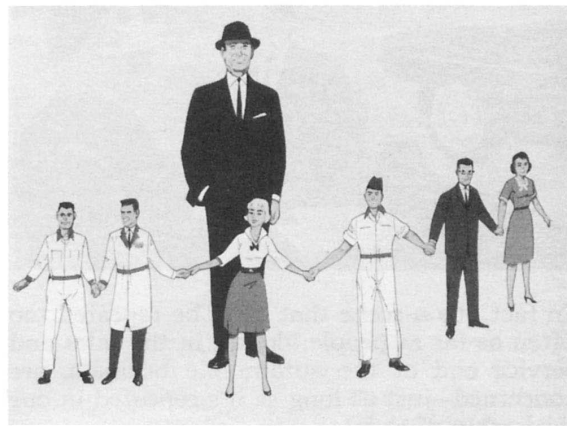


For example, with fire insurance you can protect the investment you have in your home and its furnishings, in case the place goes up in smoke along with everything in it.

Theft insurance protects the investment you have in your car, should a couple of crooks happen along some night and turn the family bus into a "hot" item on the police log sheet!

NO CUSTOMER INSURANCE POLICY YET!

Although you can buy a policy to cover just about anything else, no insurance company has come out with a policy that will protect the investment we have in a customer . . . a policy that will reimburse us for the loss of income we'd suffer if he should decide to quit doing business with our dealership.



That being the case, the job of protecting the customer investment boils down to dealership people like us, doing whatever it takes to keep him on the regular customer list as long as we possibly can.

But, in the competitive automotive world of today, this is no simple task!

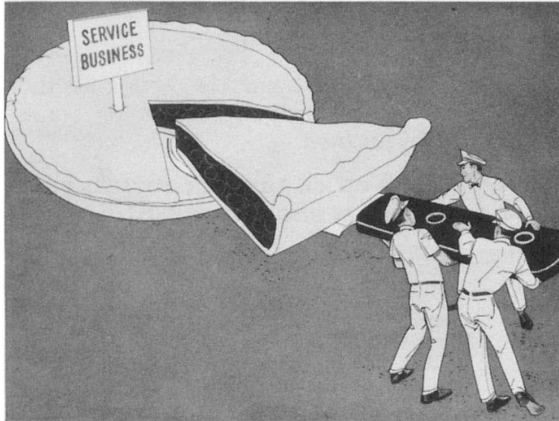
EVERYBODY'S GETTING INTO THE ACT!

As all of us know, independent garages and big service centers have sprung up like weeds during the past several years. The number of automotive specialty shops has been on the upward trend also, with a wide assortment of services, ranging all the way from mufflers to rebuilt engines.

And at least one grocery supermarket chain is getting into the act with service centers located on their parking lots for the convenience of their customers.

Naturally, all of these organizations are out to grab off just as much of the rich automotive after-market as they possibly can.

Of course, the bigger the slice these independents and chain operators take out of the service business pie . . . the less there is for us.



Now . . . a possible loss in service business for us is bad enough all by itself. But unfortunately, it doesn't stop there.

NEW-CAR SALES ARE ALSO AFFECTED

A recent survey among car owners revealed some additional service facts and figures that can have still another effect on our business and our personal incomes in the future. Here's what the survey showed:

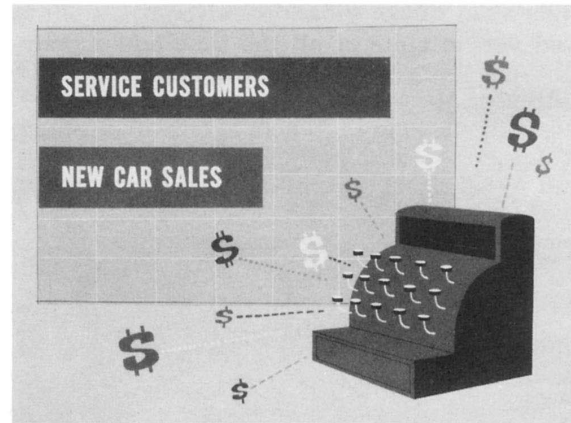
Of those owners who said they use the service facilities of the dealership *where they bought their car* . . . *sixty percent* stated that they plan to purchase their next new car from that *same dealership*.



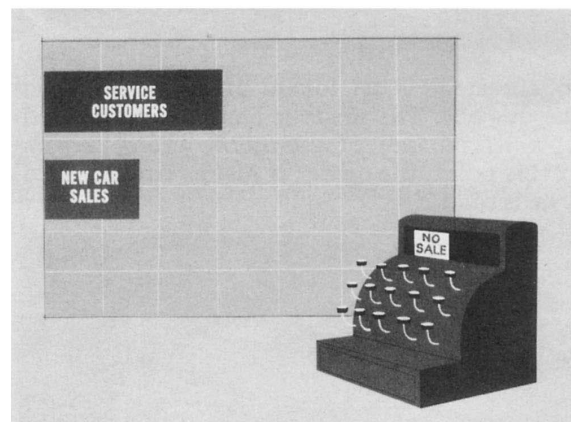
On the other hand, it was a different story with owners who said they have their service work done at some outside facility. *Less than twenty-five percent* of these owners said they

would buy a car from the dealer who sold them originally.

All of which proves two well-known facts about this business:



First, the more owners you can keep as regular service customers, the greater your chances are of selling them another new car. Meanwhile, their service dollars are going into *your* cash register instead of somebody else's!



Second, when customers slip away and buy their service from an outsider, it not only cripples chances for a repeat new-car sale . . . it also cuts down on parts and labor income.

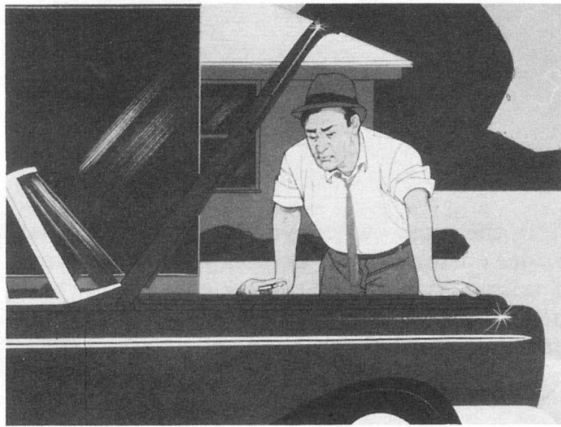
With these facts in mind, and knowing that the woods are full of competitors, *how can any dealership service department afford to provide their customers with anything less than the best kind of service . . . personalized quality service?*

And yet, what happens sometimes?

THE CASE OF THE NEW-CAR DELIVERY

When a new car is delivered to an owner, it's an opportunity for the service department to raise a regular service customer "from a pup", you might say.

And yet, in spite of all the time and money that has been invested in the customer up until now, there have been cases . . . and we all know about them . . . where a new car gets out of the shop with something wrong. Something that by all rights should have been caught and fixed.



So, the stage is set for an unhappy situation like this one. The mistake has been discovered . . . *much too late . . . and by the wrong person.* At this point, the owner is just as embarrassed as he is mad.



And his attitude doesn't improve one bit when his wife says she can't understand why he didn't use his head and make sure the car was okay in the first place!

What's more, things can get progressively worse if his kids should come up with the brilliant suggestion that maybe he should have bought a different kind of car anyhow!

SUSPICION REARS ITS UGLY HEAD!

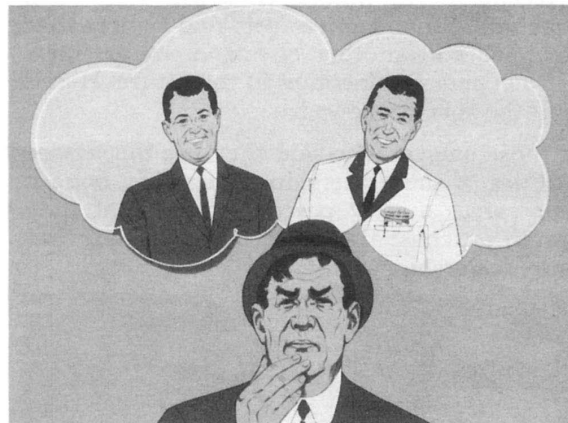
All the time this new owner is getting all the family "help", he's undoubtedly doing some tall thinking of his own.

"If they slipped up on this", he says to himself, "I wonder *what else* they missed?"

Whether he finds something else or not (and he will usually look around until he does!), the owner already has his doubts about the outfit who sold him the car.

As a result, the salesman who told him all about how wonderful it would be to own and drive a car like this one . . . *he's on the spot!*

And the service manager who assured him the car was all fixed up and ready to roll . . . *he's on the spot*, along with the rest of the service crew!



SCENE TWO: THE UNHAPPY RETURN

Naturally, the owner comes back to the service department under a full head of steam, and a well-selected assortment of very uncomplimentary remarks! But can you really blame him?

After all, when a man spends the kind of money it takes to purchase a car today, doesn't he have every right to expect that the merchandise will be in good condition when he drives it away? Wouldn't we feel the same way if we were going to make the monthly payments?

And where does all this leave the dealership in general, and the service department in particular?



Right back where they started from . . . doing the very things they should have done in the first place.

They haven't saved any time. They haven't saved any money.



In fact, it may cost them *more* now than it would have cost to do the job correctly the first time around. And they've lost in another way, too.

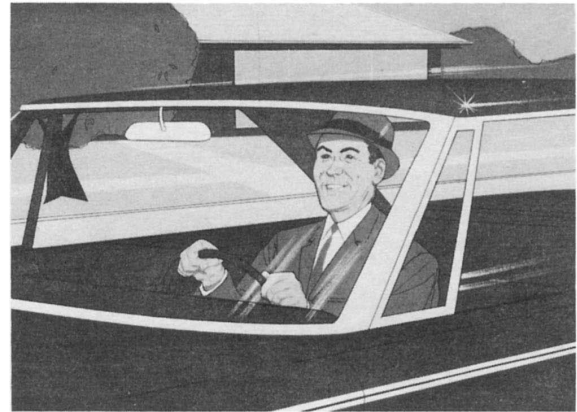
Now, in addition to everything else, they have a dissatisfied and suspicious car owner on their hands. All things considered, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense when you stop to think about it, does it?

SAME AMOUNT OF WORK . . . DIFFERENT RESULT!

Chances are that if the same amount of work they eventually were forced to do had gone

into the job originally, this service department would have gotten off on the right foot with their new customer.

Granted, there might have been a few adjustments to make after he'd driven the car a while . . . and he probably would have gone along with that.

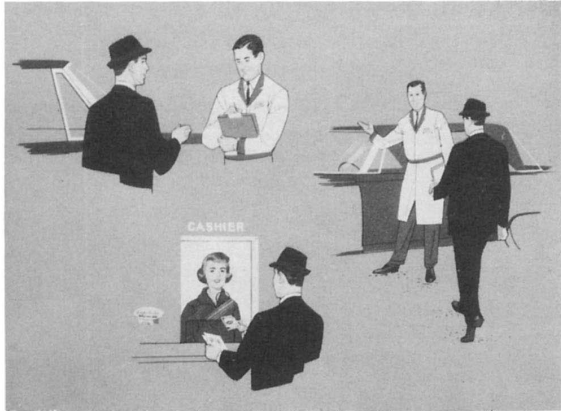


However, with the job done right the first time, he would have gotten the impression from the way the car looked, sounded and handled, that this outfit must know their stuff . . . that they must *care* about doing things right.

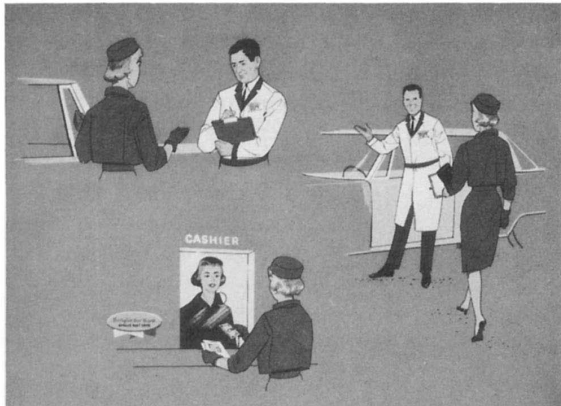
And that's the best kind of advertising a service department can have! But that's not all. After he'd arrived home and had taken the family for that all-important first ride, do you suppose he'd have driven his new car into the garage? Not unless it was raining cats and dogs! More than likely he'd have parked that car outside for a while, and showed it off to every neighbor who wandered over to take a look. And that's the best kind of advertising a *sales department* can have!



Of course, the proper delivery of a new car . . . important as it is . . . is only part of the job of building customer loyalty and protecting the customer investment. There are other factors involved, and one has to do with a change within the service business itself.



For many years, the service business has been primarily a man's world. It was usually the male member of the household who brought the car in for service, picked it up when it was ready, and paid the bill. Today the picture is quite a different one.



More and more women are entering the service picture every day.

This is due largely to the population shift to the suburbs, a sharp increase in the number of two-car families . . . and the fact that many women who are employed, drive their own cars to work instead of using public transportation.

Small wonder, then, that we now see a greater number of women than ever before, handling more of the car service chores that were form-

erly taken care of by men.

MRS. SERVICE CUSTOMER IS A V.I.P.

Latest statistics on the subject show that more than fifty percent of all the service sold in this country today *is bought by women!* This makes Miss or Mrs. Service Customer a Very Important Person as far as we are concerned.

But, unfortunately for us, she is the one service customer most likely to be lured away from the dealership by gasoline service stations and independent garages . . . unless we step in and do something about it.



To begin with, the local service station or independent garage is usually closer to home or where she works. So it's more convenient.

And, since she probably knows the station manager personally, she has confidence in him and the prices he charges—which are *not* always cheap by any means, nor is his work always the best!

Now . . . does this mean the dealership service department doesn't stand a chance of getting a good share of her business?

Not by a long shot!

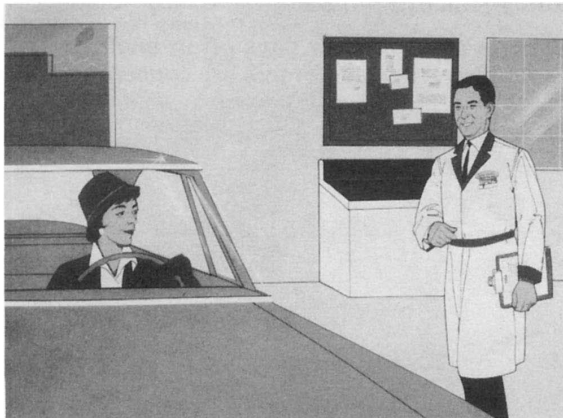
There's no reason why any service department shouldn't have its fair share of the feminine service dollar, as long as it takes into consideration those things that women—and men, too, for that matter—look for when it comes to choosing where they take their car for service.

In many instances this calls for more than doing a good job of servicing the car.

IT TAKES CAR-CARE PLUS CUSTOMER-CARE

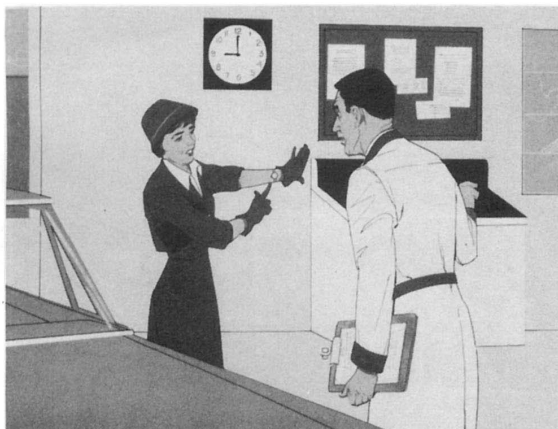
While there is no substitute for first-rate car-care, and a job done right the first time, there also has to be *customer-care*.

That simply means taking a personal interest in the customer's problems, and proving that sincerity by what's said and done.



To be more specific, it means being "Johnny-on-the-spot" when the customer drives in. A friendly greeting . . . and if you can call the customer by name, so much the better.

Of course, it's bad enough to let a male customer cool his heels until you can get to him, but keeping a *woman* waiting is something else!



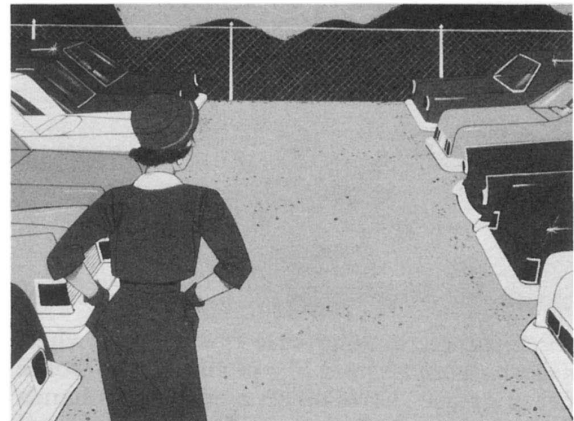
No woman likes to be kept waiting for *anything*, and she'll usually make that perfectly clear, no matter if she's an early morning customer or picking her car up at the end of the day!

But, she won't make it clear very many times!

She'll simply go some place else the next time, and take her business with her!

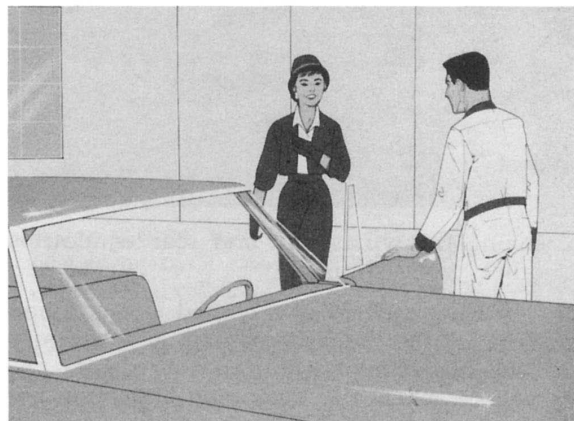
ELIMINATE THE PARKING LOT SEARCH!

Another thing that annoys a woman . . . and men don't like it much either . . . is having to search through the parking area for her car after she has paid the bill.



This is particularly true if the car has to be parked outside where the lot is apt to be crowded. Not all women are expert drivers, and getting into a car and maneuvering it out of a tight spot is more than they care to handle!

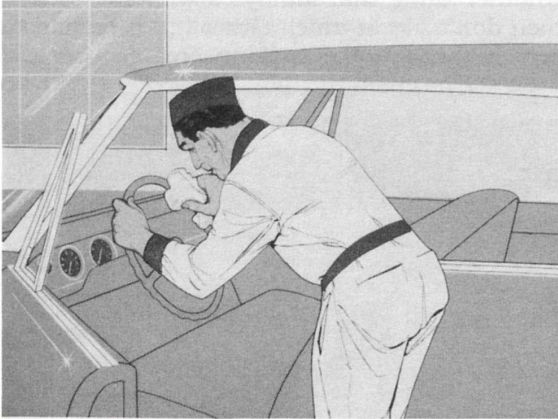
However, in a service department where customer-care is just as important as car-care, they'll make arrangements to bring the car around for a customer.



In fact, one service manager claims it costs him less than the price of a pack of cigarettes per car to do this . . . a small price for satisfaction!

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

Sometimes it's the small things that matter most with a service customer . . . especially women.



For instance, making sure the steering wheel is clean doesn't sound like much . . . until some dirt or grease shows up on a customer's hands or clothes . . . or on a pair of women's gloves!

A little thing? Yes . . . but it's the little things that count!



Cleaning the windshield and rear window is another "little" thing.

But, if this courtesy is extended in a gasoline station for two bucks' worth of gas, can any service department afford *not* to do it . . . especially when the customer has probably paid a much higher bill?

Some service departments make a habit of not only cleaning the windshield, they also brush or vacuum the front floor mats and empty the ashtrays.

BEING A GOOD LISTENER PAYS OFF!

As any red-blooded male knows, women like to talk, talk, talk!

What they like most is a person who has the patience to listen . . . and sometimes it takes a *lot* of patience! But it is still one of the best ways to build confidence in the mind of a customer—male or female.

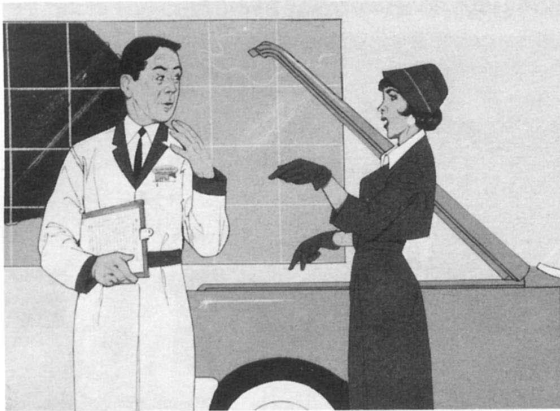
Being a good listener pays off in another way as far as women customers are concerned.



Most women . . . and some of the male customers . . . don't know too much about the mechanics of an automobile. For that reason, their description of what *they* think is wrong with the car can be pretty weird at times. This calls for a good listener . . . and a good interpreter as well!



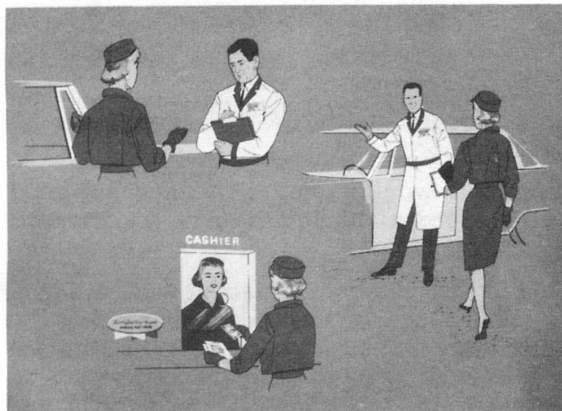
But when it gets to be too much of a mystery, road-testing the car with the customer is the only safe way to go. If something gets lost in the translation of her description . . . and the job bounces . . . it can be a tough one to handle!



That's when she gives you the cold eye and tells you that she "very distinctly" remembers telling you *exactly* what was wrong with her car.

And that's just another way of telling you she doesn't think you were listening to her in the first place!

Furthermore, all the time she is giving you the "business", she may very well be comparing you with that service station manager she knows—the one who *always* listens to her! And, she may be deciding right then to take her car to him the next time. So here's what it amounts to:



A woman wants to do business with people who treat her with *respect* and *courtesy* . . . people who take a *personal interest* in her problems, and who she feels she can trust to do the job right. If a service department will do that much, and at the same time provide a clean, well-arranged and well-lighted shop for her to drive into . . . then there's a better than

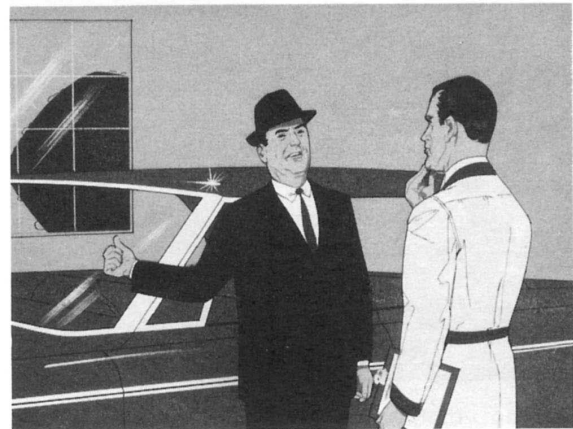
even chance that she'll spend a good many service dollars there.



TURNING A "COME-BACK" INTO A "PLUS"

Of course, important as customer-care is, no service department prospers very long without expert *car-care*, as we all know. And the combination of both makes the best kind of a customer investment protection team there is.

However, the human element being what it is, a mistake can happen in the best of places.

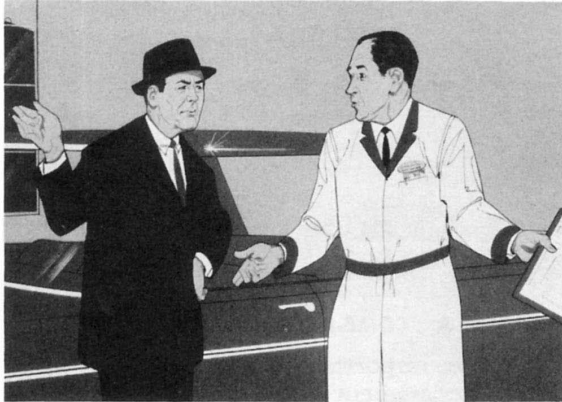


When it does, it usually shows up in the form of a come-back job, accompanied by a slightly disgruntled owner. Now . . . while the best way to protect the investment in that customer is not to have any come-backs at all . . . there's one thing to be said *for* it: and that is, the customer *did come back!*

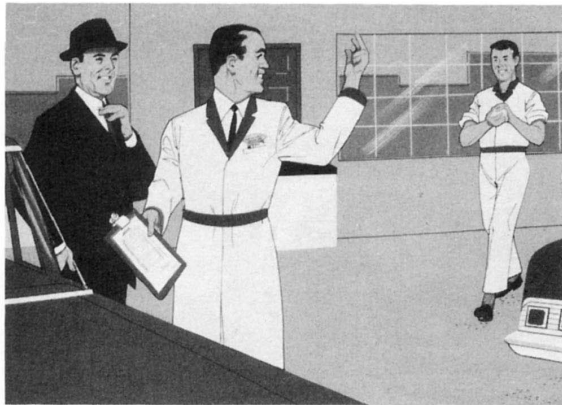
Now, at least, the service department has a *second chance* to keep his business. They have an opportunity to make things right with the customer and regain some of the lost ground.

ATTITUDE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

It doesn't take much imagination to figure out what the customer's reaction will be, however, if his complaint is handled with a lack of interest on the service manager's part.



If there's an attitude of, "Okay, so we'll fix it . . . but we couldn't care less!" . . . then the customer is bound to react just the same as we would if we were in his shoes!

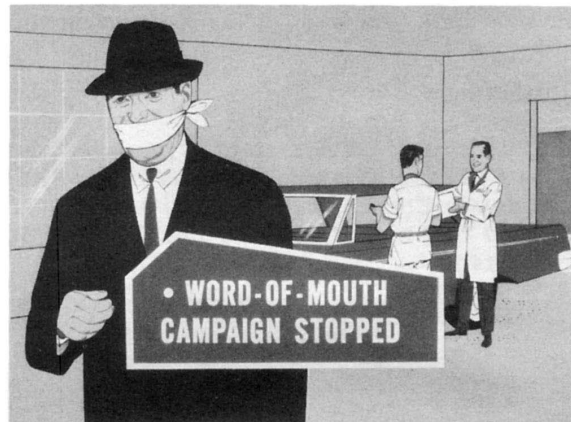


On the other hand, if his complaint is taken care of right away—and if somebody can be pulled off another job temporarily to handle it, so much the better—then the service department and everybody in it gains two ways.

First, the customer investment has been protected to the extent that this owner will probably come back here for more service.

Now he has a whole new feeling about this outfit . . . the good feeling you get when somebody treats you the right way!

In the second place, a word-of-mouth cam-



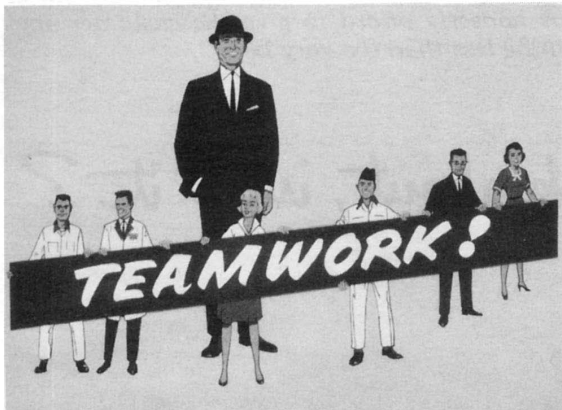
paign that wouldn't have done them any good, was stopped cold before it had a chance to get going.

And, if there's any doubt about what can happen when one of these campaigns *does* get going, here is what a research organization has discovered.

According to their findings, when a customer is unhappy with the kind of service he gets, *he will tell an average of eleven people about it*. So, if you have ten dissatisfied customers in a month, *110 people* will hear a story that puts the service department in a bad light . . . and hurts the reputation of the entire dealership.

No one person can stop this sort of publicity.

It takes the combined teamwork of everybody in the service and parts departments . . . from the man who greets the customer when he first comes in, to the service technician who does the work . . . right on through to the cashier who collects the bill.



And it takes something else, too.

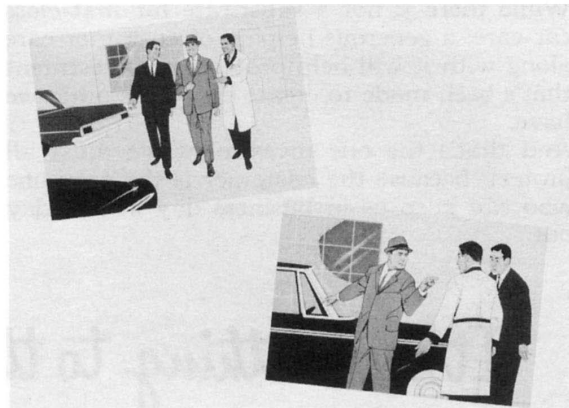


It takes a common-sense attitude toward the customer as a *person* . . . a human being like the rest of us . . . who appreciates a square deal and friendly treatment the same as we do.

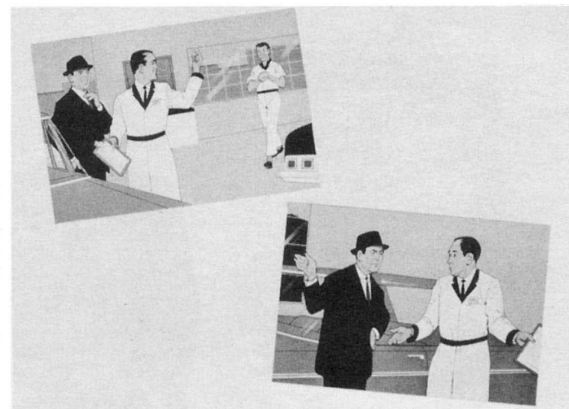
Sure, some customers are hard to please. Some of them are chiselers. But the druggist, the grocer, the department store salesman and everybody else in town find them just as difficult to do business with as we do.

BUT THE MAJORITY OF CUSTOMERS ARE REASONABLE PEOPLE WITH PERFECTLY NORMAL REACTIONS!

When a new car is delivered to them in good condition . . . as it should be . . . they react in our favor.



When the car is something less than they had a right to expect . . . they blow their tops the same as any of us would!



When a legitimate complaint is handled the right way, they're inclined to forget the mistake and give us another chance.

Give them the idea they're getting the old brush-off, and they get just as mad as we would under the same circumstances!

Just like us, they prefer to go where people take a personal interest in them!

They like to spend their money with people who act as though their business is appreciated!

And, like us, they are inclined to favor the place of business that hasn't forgotten the importance of the

"Little Things"

. . . the extra touches of service that don't cost much, but mean a lot.

While there is not a substitute for first-class car-care, a generous helping of customer-care along with it will help protect the investment that's been made to create every customer we have.

And that's the one investment we must all protect, because the customer is the only one who can keep us in business day in and day out.

His dollars pay the bills.

His dollars make our jobs possible.

His dollars give each one of us an opportunity to earn our living.

When you look at it that way, can any one of us honestly afford to give the customer anything less than the very best?

It's something to think about, isn't it?



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