

Introduction

In the 1800's, the development of the automobile was the force behind the development of the pneumatic tire. That trend is still strong as tire companies like Del-Nat introduce new products to meet the changing needs of today's drivers. There are many tire brands and this program will help you explain why your tires are the best in performance as well as price – a real value for today's value-oriented consumer.

Successfully selling tires means knowing your customers and the products and services that will meet their needs. Your customers depend on you for expert advice and recommendations. This program is designed to put the information you need right at your fingertips.

This book contains solid technical and application information, but it should not be the only resource you depend on. You should be equipped with current catalogs, brochures, tire guides, price pages, etc.

Get Ready!

Before you begin this book, establish a few good study habits that will help ensure your success. Find a quiet, well-lighted place to work where you'll be comfortable and free from distractions. Organize your reference materials, and make sure you have a pen and highlighter to make notes. You'll also need a pen or pencil to complete the test.

Once you're comfortable with the information in this book, you'll be ready to take the test. Read each question carefully and choose **the best answer**.

Good luck and good selling!

Selling Del-Nat Tires

Once you become familiar with the Del-Nat product line, it's time to focus on your sales skills. It's not enough to make the products available – your customers can buy tires from dealerships, discount clubs, department stores, auto parts chain stores and more. They need a **reason** to come to you, and to recommend you to their friends. Product knowledge, expert advice and professional sales skills will help set you apart from the competition and build customers for life.

When you talk with customers, keep this five-step selling process in mind:

1. Friendly Greeting
2. Qualify Your Prospect
3. Emphasize Value and Benefits
4. Ask for the Order
5. Overcome Objections

Friendly Greeting:

Selling starts with making a good impression. When customers visit you for the first time, they form an impression of you and your store within a few seconds. If the impression is negative, chances are there's very little you can do to change it. So... stand back and take a look at your store as if you were a first-time customer. Your parking lot should be clean, well-lit and well-maintained. Inside, your store should be clean, neat and well-organized, with attractive signage and in-store merchandising.

Don't forget the first impression **you** make on the customer. A friendly greeting and a professional attitude will help put them at ease and gain their confidence. Don't ever wait behind a counter or continue to do paperwork, etc. when a customer comes in. Meet them at the door, or better yet in the parking lot. It's

radical, but how else will people be shocked at how well they are treated?

When you greet a customer, smile, offer to shake hands and introduce yourself. Ask for the customer's name, listen carefully to be sure you understand it, and use it at least 3 times.

If you're helping someone else when a customer enters your store, be sure to acknowledge them. Tell them you'll be with them as soon as you can.

Qualify Your Prospect:

The next step is to find out enough about your customer and their vehicle so you can make a sensible tire recommendation.

Always go out to and inspect the customer's vehicle. In addition to identifying the type of vehicle and current size fitment, check the vehicle placard. Look for clues that can help you determine what's more important to the customer. Safety will be a high priority for a customer who has a baby seat. A cellular phone, laptop computer or sample case in a mid-size car can help you identify someone who uses their car for business – dependability may be the deciding factor when they purchase tires. Performance club decals on a sporty car should lead you to recommend a high-performance tire with strong cosmetic appeal.

You simply can't make a good recommendation without understanding your customer's needs. Take your time, pay close attention and listen carefully to what the customer is telling you, both in words and through their body language. Gather as much information as you can. Write it down.

Every customer has a specific reason for calling or visiting your store. Asking open-ended questions (that can't be answered with yes or no) will help them. Open-ended questions encourage customers to tell you,

in their own words, what is important to them in choosing a tire. "What kind of driving do you do?" will help identify whether they use their vehicle in the city, for long trips or off-road exploring. From there, you can learn more about their expectations of comfort, traction and handling. Some other questions you might ask:

"How satisfied are you with your car's current level of performance?"

"What do you like about the tires that are on your vehicle now?"

Typical answers will include ride quality, noise level, traction, handling, mileage and cosmetic requirements.

"Who else drives this vehicle?"

Safety, performance ratings and dependability may be factors if a spouse or teenager drives the vehicle.

Whether they're visiting for the first time or making a repeat trip to your store, it never hurts to ask a customer why they chose your dealership. They may tell you that a particular sale, a service offer or your location prompted their visit, and that can help identify whether price, reputation or extra services are potential selling points.

Emphasize Value and Benefits:

After you've listened carefully and gathered information about your customer's needs, you're ready to make a tire recommendation. This is ***not*** just pointing out the appropriate tire.

You must explain ***why*** this is the right tire for their vehicle. Demonstrate the features and benefits that make the tire a good value. Tell them about the tire and the benefits of the tire. Features are things the tire has – benefits are what these things do for the customers.

For example, telling a customer that the tire has V-shaped lateral tread grooves won't sell the tire. Explaining that these grooves

channel water away for better traction on wet roads – helps relate this feature directly back to the customer’s request for dependable, all-weather performance. Match your recommendation to the customer’s needs, and explain how the features and their corresponding benefits meet those needs.

Always sell benefits!

Point out the warranty. Del-Nat products are backed by solid warranties. Let your customer know about the extra measure of value and security this adds to their purchase, above and beyond so-called branded tires.

Explain the difference in performance levels. For example, how does a V-rated tire compare to an H-rated tire? How much more mileage can a customer expect from a tire with a 560 UTQG treadwear rating than one with a 480 rating?

If you asked good questions and listened closely to your customer, you’ll already know if snow traction or aquaplaning resistance are a priority and you can reinforce your recommendation accordingly.

Always sell from the top. While price is an important consideration, you should always start your recommendation with the best Del-Nat tire that meets or exceeds the customer’s needs. You can always recommend a more economical tire if the customer is concerned about price, but it’s hard to up-sell to a higher priced tire once you’ve presented a lower priced one that seems to fit the bill. *Remember, your ultimate goal is to sell them the best value that meets their needs, and to make them a customer for life.*

Ask for the Order:

As soon as your customer begins to agree with your recommendation, it’s time to close the sale. Never be afraid to ask for the order early **and** often. You can do this without pressuring the customer by asking,

“May we pull your car in now and get started?”, “Will this be cash or charge?” or, “Will you need a ride back to work while we install your new tires?” Always ask if there’s another item you can help them with before you write up the sale, or if there’s any other service work you can handle while the tires are being installed. Suggest an alignment, oil change or new shocks based on your earlier vehicle inspection and qualifying.

Customers who haven’t purchased Del-Nat tires in the past may be reluctant to try a new brand. Use your competitors’ ads to compare product quality and pricing, and to position Del-Nat tires in relation to a brand they’re familiar with.

Overcoming Objections:

You’ve made the best recommendation. You’ve explained the features and benefits. You’ve asked a good closing question and they still aren’t sold. How do you overcome their objection to the purchase?

First, objections are not negative. They are opportunities. An objection:

- Is a request for more information
- Helps you find out what the customer is really thinking
- Offers you a second chance to revise your recommendation and to focus on real needs
- Is an opportunity to make a sale

Your customer is trying to make sure they get the most for their money – their objections are not personal. Don’t argue with them, don’t apologize for your price and never criticize your competition or their products.

To handle objections:

1. Ask why the customer is not buying. This gives the customer the chance to explain.

2. Listen carefully to the explanation to be sure you completely understand why there is hesitation or outright rejection.
3. Acknowledge the objection and clarify as necessary. You may have to ask additional questions.
4. Offer a solution by restating the benefits and value of the tire you have recommended.
5. Ask for the order ... again.

Always use objections to your advantage.

A Word About Telephone Selling...

Customers will call to ask about an advertised special, check prices, verify store hours or ask for directions. These telephone calls are not interruptions. Every time you speak to a customer on the phone, you have another opportunity to sell not just Del-Nat tires, but your dealership as well.

When you answer the telephone, smile first. It's a simple trick, but it portrays a positive image through your tone of voice. Your greeting should be pleasant and enthusiastic; the customer must know that you're ready, willing and able to answer their questions. Introduce yourself to the customer and ask for their name.

Never ask what size tires a customer needs. They probably don't know anyway. If you ask them to check, you have lost them. Keep a tire guide near the phone. Quote your lowest priced tire, and mention the other products and services your store has available. Make sure you have a price page

near the phone. It is amazing how many dealers can not easily quote a price. The impression this leaves is ***terrible***. Don't forget to offer trade-in value for their current tires. Let them know what services are included in the price you have quoted, and assure them that you will be competitive.

You can give a customer basic pricing and availability information over the phone, but your objective is to "sell" them on visiting your store. Encourage them to bring their vehicle in so you can evaluate their needs and recommend the best tires. Get their phone number and make an appointment for their visit.

Conclusion

Building customers for life... that's what it's all about. It's ***our*** goal and ***yours***. Knowledge, preparation and attitude are the most important tools you have:

- Know your products
- Know your services
- Identify your customers' needs
- Make confident recommendations
- Simplify the purchase process

The entire customer experience should be designed to produce one reaction, "Wow, I didn't know buying tires could be that good." That's how you get "customers for life."

Dealing With Customers...

Customers often talk about the anxiety involved with selecting a mechanic. It shouldn't have to be so difficult, however. Try these simple tips to make it easier for them:

- Emphasize your record of honest dealings with customers and your desire to make their car last as long as possible.
- Encourage customers to make referrals. Asking for business can feel awkward, but the rewards, in terms of new business, make it worth the effort.
- Clearly post all certifications you have, like those from the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE).
- Make clear your approval from organizations such as the American Automobile Association.
- Help customers in describing what's wrong with their car. For instance:
 - When does the problem or noise occur?
 - Are you turning left or right?
 - Braking or accelerating?
 - Are you in a particular gear?
 - Does the problem or noise stay the same, get worse or improve in any particular situation?
 - Where is the problem or noise coming from – the front or rear? the engine? the right or left?
 - Is there any other unique or pertinent information that would help? For

instance, has the car just been on a long trip? When was the last time the car was serviced?

Women Customers...

Women's liberation has changed the roles and lives of women forever. For example, women now comprise the majority of Firestone tire purchasing and service buying customers, at least in the retail passenger and light truck side of the business. Yet with all this liberation, reaching female customers effectively is one of the biggest challenges we face in growing our businesses into the next century.

Are women such different customers than men? Absolutely. Women come to the tire purchase with much more fear, distrust and suspicion than men. They feel stereotyped as the guileless victims of unscrupulous salespeople preying on them. Far more of this fear comes from a lack of education and understanding about tires. Most women do not have any automotive background and feel ignorant about even the most basic car repair. Well, no one likes to feel stupid, and as the old saying goes, "Better to be quiet and thought stupid than to speak up and remove all doubt." So women silently accept your recommendation and leave feeling ripped off.

But all customers in general are bewildered by the wide assortment of tires and prices available. Think about how much new technology our industry has seen in the past few years. It's hard for us in the business to keep up with it, let alone the consumer!

Because women recognize that they have little car knowledge, they are receptive to explanation and education. They actually listen when you tell them something. Oh, that many of our male customers would do the same, rather than coming to the counter with

preconceived decisions on tires that are often inappropriate.

Taking the time to educate and explain the tire purchase to a female customer will pay big dividends when it comes to making a sale and building a repeat customer.

Here are a few other techniques that help:

Use The Phone Effectively

Most women call a store before they ever come inside, typically inquiring about tire prices. But when asked why they chose one particular store over another, the response was seldom that it was due to price. Instead it was "because they sounded nice on the phone." ***Women are looking for someone they can trust to do business with.*** A friendly voice, a name, taking the time to get them the information they request and inviting them to come to the store makes a world of difference as they wade through the many choices available to them.

Make Them Feel Welcome

A study done by the Los Angeles Times showed that when women walk into an automotive outlet, 90% of the time they are totally ignored. No wonder they feel ill at ease. Take the time to greet her as she walks in the door, even if you're swamped with other customers. How long does it take to smile and say "Hi, I'll be with you in a minute?"

Reduce The Fear

There you are, barricaded safely behind the protective wall of your counter, you versus the customer. Get out! Stand with your customer and have a conversation. Don't stand across from her and have a confrontation. Think about your size, too. If you're tall or large, your mere physical presence can be intimidating to a smaller woman who is already fearful. So pull up a chair. With the two of you sitting next to

each other, you are at eye level and much less intimidating. The phrase "talking down to someone" didn't come about coincidentally. Become her partner in solving her tire problem, not her opponent.

Ignoring the female customer or thinking she can be taken for granted risks not only a lost sale but a lost customer for a long, long time.

Female Market

1. 58% expect a repair shop to provide alternate transportation.
2. More than 65% of customers who take vehicles to a repair shop are women:
 - A. Women drivers 44% in 1972, 49% in 1996
 - B. Ford says women influence 80% and have veto power over 95% of automotive decisions
 - C. Almost 1/2 of new cars and 53% of used cars are purchased by women
3. Needed:
 - A. Excellent customer service
 - B. Cleanliness
 - C. Consider female counterperson or technician