

The Great Tablet Leap



**Today's Consumers Demand More Efficiency,
So Why Not Give It To Them?**

By
Jason Sideris



“Using tablets helps enable a better Service experience and provide a simple solution to problems I continuously hear about.” - Jason Sideris

The opportunity is there to gain and retain customers. Why not take advantage of that?

Having been in the service industry for more than 20 years, I hear a lot of stories about customer experiences at dealerships. After a while, most of them sound a lot alike. But a story I just heard intrigued me and reinforced the notion that changing the customer experience in service is having a big impact on the dealership’s bottom line.

My friend told me about a recent experience in the service department at her local dealership. After too many less than satisfying visits, she described her most recent trip to her dealer’s service department as the best ever: “When the service advisor came out for my appointment, he used a tablet PC.”

I wasn’t completely shocked to hear this. After all, tablets are as prevalent today as cell phones. But to hear her gush about the experience – “efficient” was the word she kept using to describe it. That was a breath or two of fresh air. She said it was quick, thorough, and she felt like her concerns were heard and tended to by the service advisor. She wasn’t rushed and didn’t feel like she was in an inquisition. What better experience could a customer ask for?

Using tablets help enable a better service experience and provide a simple solution to problems I hear about from friends and co-workers. Whether it’s the general inefficiency of the service write-up process or the lack of consumer control, the tablet helps alleviate many of the issues today’s consumers have with their service experience.

Dealers that make what I call “The Great Tablet Leap” are choosing to enhance the efficiency of the service experience for their customers. With fewer dealerships now than before the recession, the opportunity is there to gain and retain customers. Why not take advantage of that?

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Why Make the Leap?

Tablets are fast becoming ubiquitous. PC Magazine estimates that 31 percent of all Internet users have one, and that number will soon rival or surpass the amount of people using smartphones (more than 50 percent according to Forbes). Look around your waiting room. How many customers use these devices while they wait? Then ask yourself, **“Why aren’t we connecting with customers on that level yet?”**

Your dealership customers place a high value on the overall customer experience and the efficiency of the service process. If you also value these expectations, how many more customers could you serve? How many more could you sell to? How much could you increase your bottom line?

Or, look at it another way: If you’re not delivering an efficient and pleasing experience in Service, how many customers are you losing to another dealership or the quick-lube chain down the street?

Making “The Great Tablet Leap” is one more way you can increase the efficiency of your service operation while improving the service you deliver to every customer. Here’s how – and why – you should make that leap.

Efficiencies in the Dealership

The average American is now keeping a car for a little more than 11 years.ⁱ That’s a lot of potential for maintenance, for interaction between the dealership and customers, and for profit if you can retain the customer. The efficiencies the tablet can bring to your service operation can turn those one-time customers into return customers and help your dealership realize that potential. Most dealers already do a great job of marketing to customers for that first service appointment after a purchase. But a free oil change only means so much to the consumer. Make the experience count so the second and third trip back is a reality.

Tablets help provide a completely different customer experience:

- The service advisor and customer interact together at the customer’s car rather than on opposite sides of a desk with the customer staring at the back of a PC.

“If you’re not delivering an efficient and pleasing experience in Service, how many customers are you losing?”

The customer is more involved with the experience; more comfortable – like they’re in control, because they’re viewing the same information you are.

- They do everything at the vehicle, from reviewing and confirming the customer’s questions and concerns to completing the vehicle inspection to signing the repair order digitally.
- It’s a more personalized experience that combines many of the benefits of handwriting ROs at the car with the advantages of entering information into a digital device. It’s the best of both worlds for both dealers and consumers.

In addition to the improved dynamics tablets can create, the best tablet systems – especially those built to work as one with the dealership management system (DMS) – offer added efficiencies.

These efficiencies range from emailing the customer the report card, RO, and pictures of the vehicle to capturing all required signatures with a digital pen for a more compliant process – all on the spot from the tablet. You can also print directly from the tablet and dock it next to the computer at your desk for a dual screen experience.

Plus, when working as one with the DMS, there are no more double entries, no more extra keystrokes, and no more managing two systems. Both the customer experience and the service write-up process can be simplified and improved with a tablet.

Connecting with Consumers on Their Level

Today’s consumers use tablets every day. The businesses they frequent are starting to use them in their everyday operations, too. The more familiar consumers become with tablets, the more acceptable – and viable – they become as enhancements to the customer service experience at the dealership – and in every retail environment. It’s one more way retailers can connect with consumers at their level.

But what does that mean and how do you connect with them there? The answer is two-fold:

First, you create a consumer experience that’s on par with those at popular retail stores, which, in turn, connects with the consumer on an emotional level. That’s the biggest part of the consumer experience these days – how shopping for something makes you feel, your comfort level with the experience. That’s why tablets are so popular – because the customer is more involved with the experience – more comfortable – like they’re in control, because they’re viewing the same information you are.

When your dealership makes “The Great Tablet Leap,” you’re helping to reduce inefficiencies in the Service drive, improving the customer experience and interacting with consumers on the level they desire.

Second, the efficiencies you gain in the service drive help make the overall consumer experience more efficient, too. Quick-lube chains are great at marketing to customers that their experience is efficient. It’s time to show customers their experience at the dealership can be just as efficient, if not better.

The key to the experience is introducing customers to it during the sale. Some dealers already do that by offering incentives to customers to get them back for the first oil change.

That early start is a great way to build a service relationship. But how do you ensure they will come back for every oil change? **You give them a great experience that first time and every time after that, an experience that’s enabled by the tablet PC** and designed around the customer’s needs without sacrificing the needs of the dealership. That’s how you meet customers on their level.

Gen Y’s Expectations

John Noone, president of Ford Credit, has said: “People between the ages of 16 to 29 will refine or customize the buying experience. The question is whether it will be evolutionary or revolutionary, but we should prepare for it.”ⁱⁱ

Despite Gen Y’s waning interest in car ownership, **this is the same group that’s expected to purchase 40 percent of new cars over the next 10 years.**

If dealers want to capture their fair share of those sales – and the service opportunities that go with them – Gen Y consumers need to be convinced that the experience of servicing their vehicle at the dealership is comparable to sipping a latté at Starbucks or browsing for a couch at IKEA.

Gen Y shoppers value their time and have little patience for inefficiencies. They want to schedule their appointment online and want the experience to feel personalized. And, when they show up for service, they expect their in-person experience to match what they’ve already experienced with the dealership online. Tablets are an important tool in helping you deliver the modern and personalized experience Gen Y consumers demand.

When your dealership makes “The Great Tablet Leap,” you’re helping to reduce inefficiencies in the service drive, improving the customer experience, and interacting with consumers on the level they desire.



Dealers utilizing tablets in the Service drive have realized an 11% gain in gross revenue.

If you're successful in getting consumers into your store, you need to maximize their experience so they come back. Give them the efficiency they want in the way they want it. Do that, and they'll be back.

Seize Your Opportunity While It's Here

With 4,000 fewer dealerships, the opportunity for dealers to capitalize on the demand from customers for more efficient service – and the opportunity to realize larger profits – is here, now. Quick-lube chains have a large market share in the service industry, and current consumers are frequenting them largely because they're convinced these chains are more efficient.

Whether these places are more efficient or not is a moot point. The real issue here is the opportunity to gain new customers and how to seize it. To do that, you need to address what may be perceived as the biggest problems in Service: the inconvenience of making the appointment, the inefficiencies in the RO write-up process, and the typical customer experience across the service department.

Dealerships utilizing tablets in the service department have realized an 11 percent gain in gross revenue.ⁱⁱⁱ That's a telling statistic, but it's not surprising. The demand is there for more efficient service; dealerships just need to capitalize on it. And the more dealerships embrace and utilize tablets in their service department, the more that gross revenue percentage can increase – and the more your gross revenue percentage can increase.

Visit reyrey.com/whitepapers to read more about how the automotive industry is changing.

ⁱ Polk

ⁱⁱ WardsAuto

ⁱⁱⁱ Automotive News

Portions previously published in *Fixed Ops Magazine*.



Jason Sideris is the Director of Product Planning for Fixed Operations at Reynolds and Reynolds. He has nearly 20 years of experience working in the automotive industry and has seen firsthand how innovative technologies and solid processes can come together to lift dealership operations and improve how consumers experience the dealership.

