

CARSIDE MANNER

REAL-LIFE LESSONS IN CUSTOMER RELATIONS



We'd like to start the new year by taking a little of our own medicine. From the very beginning, we've used this space to offer our humble suggestions and the suggestions of actual shop owners

on the subject of customer relations. Well, we have customers of our own. You. And we'd like to stop for a moment, take a deep breath, and thank you, the customers who make this magazine work, for your patronage and support.

We have been pleasantly surprised over the last year at the enthusiasm and cooperation offered by our readers. More and more of you have offered your expertise, your support, and yes, your constructive criticism.

Carside Manner, the new **Tech Tips** department, and each and every one of the technical articles has benefitted from the skill and knowledge of shop owners and technicians alike.

But there's still a long way to go.

If anything, we want to increase your involvement in your magazine. It is especially important that this particular column reflect the *real* problems and solutions to customer relations as they occur in the *real* world.

It would be a grievous error for us to assume that we know all the answers to all the problems you face on a daily basis. The world already has enough experts—and sermons are for Sundays.

So please, don't assume that you have nothing to offer. The simplest ideas are very often the best, but they're worthless if they're not shared. And assuming that what's obvious to you is obvious to everyone else is equally wasteful.

“WHO IS THIS—REALLY?”

We haven't been able to call or write to each and every one of you. We do our best, but there are way too many letters. But count on the fact that we read each and every one of them.

A few of you have voiced surprise when we called. One fellow even asked, “Who is this, really?” He was surprised we had called, but even more surprised that we'd read his letter. Believe me, we put our pants on the same way you do—slowly and with great pain.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Just to get the ball rolling a little faster, here are some of the areas of keen reader interest. Please look them over. Think about some of the ways you deal with problems addressed by these topics. Think about solutions you've found successful—solutions you might share.

• **Customer Relations**—As the famous beagle might say, “Arghhh.” This continues to be a knotty problem for all concerned. We don't expect any grand schemes for winning the war, but specific battle plans are useful to all concerned. And just because you don't have a doctorate in human psychology, doesn't mean you're not coming up with some practical solutions that really work.

• **Tech Tips**—If you spent a day and a half beating your head against a wall, only to find some ridiculously simple solution to your problem, and don't share the information, shame on you. That guy in the back row shooting rubber bands at the pencil sharpener just mumbled, “Yeah, what's in it for me?” If you have to ask that question, odds are you wouldn't understand the answer.

Each of you has some hard-earned insight into a specific car or a specific problem. Pooling our resources will make everyone's life a heck of a lot easier. Here's your big chance to talk to other technicians a county or a continent away, and win some nice prizes to boot.

• **Business Experience**—In the coming months, our business section will deal with ways of improving phone skills, financing business growth, marketing, establishing in-house parts departments, remodeling and renovating your shop, extended warranties, and more. If you've been through the grinder on any of these or other business related subjects, share your experience, both good and bad with others.

• **General Preferences**—Your cards and letters have helped guide us in the selection of editorial content for the coming year. The articles you'll see in 1989 were chosen because they were the most requested areas of interest. If the majority of you find that your informational needs change, then *Import Service* will try to meet those needs as they arise—assuming you let us know.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

That about does it for this month, except to say that the wild and crazy crew here at *Import Service* wish you all a profitable and healthy 1989.

—By **Ralph Birnbaum**

DON'T FORGET ABOUT TECH TIPS

Many of you have sent in tips for our **Tech Tips** column. We'd like to thank you for your help. To those of you who haven't sent your tips in yet, we'd like to hear from you. It's your chance to win some great prizes, get your name in print, and help out your fellow technicians. Write out your mechanical tips or tricks on the reader response card. Don't have enough room on the card? Drop a note in the mail or give us a call. We look forward to hearing from you.