

Case Study



“*Business is Motoring with the help of ActionCOACH*”

Dashwood Service Centre in High Wycombe has been trading successfully for over 26 years. So its owner, John Furnell, quite understandably, didn't think he needed a business coach.

“I didn't realise I needed help until I met an Action Coach, and he started talking about my customer database – what I did with it, who my customers are, where they come from. It was just a 45 minute conversation, but it told me I was missing some serious tricks!”

John was indeed, as without the answers to these questions he wasn't focussing his marketing effort or budget. So he started working with his Action Coach in May 2008, and 18 months on John Furnell's already good garage has got a whole lot better. His coach has systematically helped him look at, and improve, almost every aspect of his business.

“That fresh pair of eyes makes such a difference. My coach has helped me look at myself and the garage, where we are going, what makes us successful and what is holding us back,” admits John.

Following on from their first conversation, an early area of focus was on how John promotes the company, as he explains: “We were already sending customers an MOT/Service reminder but my coach suggested adding a phone follow-up to this process. We immediately saw the difference. The conversion of reminders into bookings leapt by 38%.”

Dashwood Service Centre has also cleaned its database and implemented a campaign rewarding clients for referring new customers. It now sends printed newsletters to customers, has a website, carefully measures its print advertising and sends quarterly letters. These letters are carefully themed to subtly drive up additional sales. For instance, the summer letter talks about air conditioning.

“It all sounds really straightforward,” says John “but by tightening up what we were already doing and introducing more things we have achieved real results.”

John can say this with confidence as his business coach has encouraged him to measure everything. John now analyses the customers or vehicles his garage deals with each month, the types of work, referrals, enquiries, his average sale, his workforce's hours of production, month by month profitability and the return on investment from his marketing.

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“You name it, if it’s important for me to know it, I now measure it” adds John.

A business that has been trading so successfully for so long obviously has a good reputation but his Action Coach encouraged John to take a closer look at what current customers think about his garage.

“We recognised that our business is all about trust. We’re very honest and upfront, customers know there won’t be any unnecessary charges – if they get a bill for £100 that’s because £100 of work has been done on the car.”

The garage also works hard not to be intimidating to customers, but very friendly and approachable. This is particularly important for female customers. While such insights might seem obvious, they have been carefully used to shape the way the company does everything. For instance, the website has customer testimonials and a film featuring John – presenting the approachable face of the garage even before customers experience it for themselves. Also the newsletters sent out are on a good quality paper and give advice rather than simply focusing on sales – thus further building trust in John, his business and the quality of its work.

“Trust is so high that even in today’s climate we hardly ever have customers asking what a job will cost,” says John.

His coach has also helped John examine the entire customer experience. Care is taken to greet customers in an upbeat way no matter what time of day they call, to demonstrate their importance to us as a customer.

Although the customer is king, his team is also vital to John. He has five employees; he works closely with them in the workshop and has always prioritised teamwork and training. But he concedes that although morale was good before, even the staff have noticed the difference having a coach has made:

“Only the other day my senior technician commented that the business has really moved on since ActionCOACH came on board.”

It certainly has. Since May 08, in every month, bar one, sales have increased. Dashwood Service Centre has 1,000 active customers and 1,260 vehicles on its database, sales are running at £420,000 per annum, 30% up on 18 months ago and margin has improved too.

As a measure of their confidence in the future Dashwood are investing in a major refurbishment of the garage premises. This will increase the capacity and efficiency of the workshop and also provide improved customer and staff facilities. John will also need to hire extra staff as a result. He concludes:

“If you had told me in early 08 when businesses everywhere were dying that we’d be doing all this, I’d have said you were mad. But with Action Coach’s help we’ve improved an already good business – I’m absolutely thrilled.”

To see what ActionCOACH
can do for your business
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