

Getting The Most Out of Your Dealership Service Visit

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I haven't always had the pleasure of working for AM General with just HUMMERS. After finishing technical school I worked at a large GM dealership for 15 years. While my responsibilities were mostly as a service technician, I did spend six months as a service consultant (the person who greets you and translates your concerns to the technician) and four years as a shop foreman (the person responsible for making sure the flow and quality of repairs is up to par). During five of those years I was able to share some of my knowledge with the students of a local technical State College by instructing some evening classes.

Recalling some of those experiences gave me the idea of a helpful article for owners about technicians, and how you can help the service department get the information they need to properly fix your HUMMER right the first time, every time.

Wanted: Good Technicians

Requirements for a dealership technician usually include technical school training; previous repair experience; ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) certification, which is a national standard verifying the technicians' skills; and of course, their own tools. Ever notice all those shiny large toolboxes at the service department? It's common for a technician to invest over \$25,000 in personal tools-easily the highest investment in tools by any skilled trade. Those basics are just to "get in the door". Once in, technicians spend countless hours every year updating their product knowledge through manufacturer update training in the form of computer based, written, video, satellite (Interactive Distance Learning) hands-on and testing at regional sites.

H2 Specific Training

Because the H2 used many existing GM power train and body control components, most GM technicians were familiar with the operating systems and only required some inhouse training when H2 hit the ground running back in 2002.

H1 Specific Training

Do to the uniqueness of many H1 components, H1 training requires technicians to attend a weeklong program at the AM General Technical Center in Mishawaka, Indiana. This class includes a plant tour, hands-on and classroom instruction.

It also includes driver training at the world famous AM General off-road facility. This is the same off-road course used by the HUMMER Driving Academy (H1 and H2) and our military counterparts for training different branches of the armed forces on the HUMVEE. Understanding how a product operates in the environment it was designed for is critical to diagnosing a customer's concern.

Information, Stories and, "It does what?"

This is all nice to know you say, but what can I do to help the technician understand my concerns during a service visit? The answer to that is in a word: information. Information that is written legibly!

Have you ever told someone a story or a joke, and later heard them tell the same story or joke to someone else? I bet they didn't tell it the same way you did. Chances are they left some detail out, perhaps a small but important one, and the whole dynamic of the tale changed.

What's a Diagnostic Worksheet?

A diagnostic worksheet is a tool used by some dealerships. It's a piece of paper you fill out. It asks simple questions about the different systems on your vehicle. It's kind of like filling out a medical history form, only this one is about your vehicle. Next time you're in the service lane, ask your friendly service consultant if they use them. If so, keep one on hand in your glove box, just in case.

He said, she said.

This is what can happen when you visit a service lane at your dealership.

Diagnostic Worksheet

Your service consultant, (whose list of job responsibilities can be daunting at times) is tasked with listening to all of your concerns about your vehicle, then reducing that information to what can fit on a couple of lines on a repair order and handing that off to a technician who is responsible for fixing the vehicle. Combine this with a consultant that deals with as many as 30 different customers in a day and a technician that may repair 10 different vehicles in a day and, well, you get the idea. Important information about your concerns can be misinterpreted, making the repair attempt much more difficult for the technician.

Most GM Master technicians could talk to a customer and, by asking the right type of questions, can almost pinpoint the area on the vehicle that needs to be investigated. This is where you can help your own cause. Answer the questions they would ask before you get there.

What are those questions?

Use the following as a guide for making some notes to your technician. Let's assume you have a rattle in front of the driver area sometimes.

- Who? Who is the primary driver when the problem occurs? Can you leave a phone number on the notes if someone from the dealership wants to contact them for more information?
- What? In our example, it's a rattle noise coming from in front of the driver. Describe the rattle in your own words. For example, it makes a sound like you were shaking a shoebox with only one shoe in it. Don't feel silly about how you describe it. My grandmother once told me that when it's wet outside, her car sounds like birds in the park. Just from that description I suspected a problem with a belt. Sure enough, that was the problem area.
- When? Does it occur on certain roads? Roads that are new or smooth or the kind that have cracks or small holes in them. A graded gravel surface that is washboard could duplicate the sound, as might a brick road.
- Where? Is there a certain place? Perhaps when you pull in and out of your driveway. Describe the curb and grade.
- How do I duplicate the concern? This is usually the most important one. Technicians always want to know exactly what they must do to duplicate the concern. Tell them, in detail. It's okay to overlap information. Too much information is better than not enough.

Take the time and elaborate on paper about each concern you have. The service consultant can attach it to the repair order as a supplement to their write-up. If this seems like too much work, just think how much more effort a return trip to the dealership would be to try and duplicate a condition that couldn't be found the first time.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys.

Most service industries are concerned about their customer satisfaction scores. So is your HUMMER dealership. They want you to be so impressed with their service department that each time you receive a survey in the mail from HUMMER, you will check the Completely Satisfied box for every question, every time and return it back in the mail. Comprehensive information about your vehicle's issues, written down and attached to your repair order will allow your technician every advantage to fix your vehicle right the first time, every time and on time.

Nice Job!

Everyone likes to know when he or she did a good job. If you're impressed, inform the Service Manager. He may want to walk you back so you can meet your HUMMER technician and thank them in person. If that happens, I think you'll find they're some of the friendliest and best technicians in the business. After working with over 250 of them in training activities, I know that's my impression.

The HUMMER line of vehicles has systems that make them the most capable off-road wheeled vehicles in the world. Make sure you're getting all you can from your truck by reading your owner's manual and

following the recommended maintenance program.

