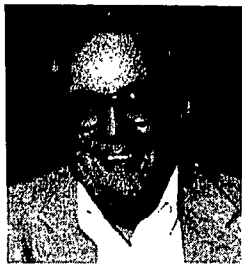


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The Road to Success

by Frank Dial,
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Customers are important. There's no getting around that fact. No matter what kind of business a person is involved with, without customers he isn't going to have any business at all. A department store may have good merchandise and the right price, but if there are no customers then the merchandise sits on the shelves. A McDonald's may have hamburgers but if no one buys them, it's useless.

Like anything else that gets put together, there are parts of a business which must come together. It's like putting together a car, like building a house, like mixing up a recipe. There are certain components which when fitted together make a thing work. One of those components in a business is knowing where your customers are. Another is knowing a bit of information about them. Information such as, is he buying from you to sell to someone else or is he making a purchase that will strictly be retail?

Take our business for instance — the automotive aftermarket. We know who and where our customers are. They're retail or do-it-yourselfers. They're the traditional customer — the service station, the garage, the repair facility. They're the small fleet owner and the independent trucker. And, in some areas of the country, farmers are our customers as well. Because we serve so many different markets, with so many different needs, it's important to implement, and implement well, programs which enable us to serve each of these markets.

The retail market is one we are reaching with the NAPA Store Design Program (although it seems other customers like it too). We are also reaching them with an emphasis on local newspaper advertising. But we're continuing

to pursue the traditional market with our trade advertising, with our signage, with our support of ASE and with special programs designed exclusively for our traditional customers.

Programs like the AutoCare Program. As you know the AutoCare Program began in 1986 as the AutoCare Team or A.C.T. At that point in time A.C.T. was limited to only a few NAPA manufacturers. Now, it's been expanded and includes many of our manufacturers. It's a bigger program for 1987 and, therefore, it deserved a bigger name.

Now, if you're wondering why, out of all the NAPA programs for traditional customers, the AutoCare Program is the one I'm concentrating on, it's actually very simple. It's because it is one program



The Piedmont Division Jobber Ad Council discusses the AutoCare Program at a recent meeting. Pictured, left to right, are Frank Dial and Pat Jensen, NAPA AUTO PARTS/Motor Specialty Co., Inc. in Charlottesville, VA (served by NAPA Richmond).

which encompasses so much. It encourages the usage of dealer signage. It is an on-going program, not just a limited promotion, and it includes aspects of merchandising, advertising and sales promotion that our dealer customers need us to help them with. It's a service NAPA provides and, as I mentioned earlier, it's an example of that part of a business, that extra ten percent, that will make you as successful as you possibly can be. It's a difference between what our competition is offering the traditional market and what we as NAPA have to offer them. And the beauty of AutoCare is that it can be adapted to your market. It gives you a structure, allows you to bend and still, can help you with your success.

Did you know that there are 280,000 independent dealers in this country (according to *Motor/Age*)? And that by the end of this century that number will be cut practically in half? That's going to mean less repair outlets and we have got

to start planning now to get those remaining dealers as loyal NAPA customers.

In the Piedmont Division we're planning ahead with AutoCare. We have signed up 1,280 traditional customers as AutoCare participants. What's more, those 1,280 are the traditional customers who have the best reputations and are the most successful. I'm not telling you that getting those customers sold on AutoCare was as easy as pie. But it was worth the extra efforts that were made by jobbers, D.C. personnel and others to get that many reputable dealers participating in the program.

The Jobber Advertising and Marketing Council from the Piedmont Division was instrumental in getting our version of the AutoCare Program off the ground. We also met with manufacturers who are a part of AutoCare. In order to best help our traditional customers we needed our manufacturers to be pulling together with us as much as possible.

That philosophy of pulling together worked well. And it, like the program itself, made sense on every level. For the traditional market it meant more exposure to the public, through the advertising and merchandising support our jobbers are assisting with, and therefore, more business. When our traditional customers got more business, it meant more parts and products were needed and that led to more sales for NAPA AUTO PARTS stores. More sales for the stores meant more sales for the manufacturer and so it goes.

Division-wide we chose a specific time to heavily promote AutoCare dealers. We selected April and because of the nature of the business in our area decided that brakes would be the best product (remember what I said about knowing your customers and your markets). And, we spent March recruiting our best dealers to join the AutoCare Program. With over 1,200 dealers taking part you can bet it was a success for all parties.

We plan on doing another heavy thrust later in the year and we again expect it to be successful. Between the manufacturer offerings, the promotional aspects and your marketplace needs, it's a program which promotes your customers and your business. As I said earlier, it takes that extra effort to assure success. And, we have to make sure we have that effort to move into the future. AutoCare could be the vehicle that gets you there.