

Today's Auto Repair

with Chip Stewart

-Incompetence or Fraud?- Part 3

Automotive Technicians often get blamed for incompetence when, in fact, they were trying to do their customer a favor by "saving him money". So, how much should a quality repair cost? Just like any other business, the price that an object or service (repair) sells for is dependent on a number of factors. Quality is one of the main factors. The type of vehicle, type and quantity of parts, amount and difficulty of labor are others. Most of the parts and labor are delivered to the consumer with a little extra added on to insure the continual operation of that business. That part is profit. If a company has a profit margin that is too high or too low for the quality of goods and services delivered, the result is the same - they go out of business. Profit margin is a fine line. Often, when an auto repair is priced to the owner, the owner complains that the price is too high. "I can't afford that." "I'm going to get rid of my car." "It's just not worth the investment." Sometimes it's the truth but more often it's a ploy to get the repair facility to offer a lower price. But the cost of doing business is constant - lower prices mean something will not be delivered. That something will be quality of parts or labor, type and length of warranty, or customer service. Lower price means lower quality - period. And low quality auto repairs don't last. Guess who gets blamed for the failures? The auto technician is labeled incompetent because he did his customer a "favor" by doing the job for less than it *should* have cost. The "favor" is forgotten - the "incompetence" is remembered.

In reality, the cost of any repair is too much. After all, you *paid* for your car once - you don't want to have to *pay* for it again. The I.R.S. gives you a deduction of 32 cents per mile when you use your car for business purposes. That's suppose to cover the cost of the vehicle, insurance, maintenance and repairs. That's \$32,000 for every hundred thousand miles of travel. The I.R.S. considers that 'average'. I suspect it's more in their favor than yours. Do the math - is your total investment in you car average or are you "saving money"?

As for the auto technician that did his customer a favor - is he really incompetent? Probably not. Quite often, during a repair, a technician will uncover other problems or his repair will cause the next "weakest link" to surface. Is he incompetent because he's not a magician and can't see into the future? Of course not. But what if the auto technician makes a mistake - he forgets something - makes an error in judgment - just plain goofs up - is he incompetent? It is impossible for any of us to be anything other than human. We may strive for perfection but our humanism will prevail, and that does not make one incompetent. However, incompetence *does* exist in *every* profession. If you've paid attention to these articles you know how to avoid it when getting your car repaired. Competent repair facilities will advise you about your auto and its repair and maintenance, charge a fair and reasonable price for their service, stand behind that advice and service, and still be there when you need them again.

