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Car Shopping

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By  Sean Tucker 07/02/2024 11:40am



Service departments at car dealerships are not all the same. Some get you through to a human being on the phone quickly and help you set up a service appointment efficiently. Others leave you waiting in interminable hold cycles.



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The best experience? That goes to those who buy an Acura, a new study says.

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Pied Piper, a company that provides secret-shopper services to the automotive industry, conducted the study. Researchers called service departments at 2,716 dealerships nationwide to schedule a service appointment.

They gave each dealership's response a score on a 100-point scale. Sixty-two percent of the score was "determined by efficiency measurements." The remaining 38% went to "quality measurements, where dealerships provide a proactively helpful experience that goes above and beyond the customer's basic expectations."

You'll be surprised to learn that the experience of calling a car dealer can be frustrating.

1 In 7 Callers Hang Up In Frustration

One in seven times, customers hung up without successfully scheduling an appointment. "These failures occur for reasons such as getting no answer to the call, getting voicemail, a hangup, endless hold, or getting lost in a phone tree," according to the study.

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But 55% of callers reached a human within one minute, and received an appointment time within a week of their call.

The average score, on a 100-point scale, was 58. Acura dealers outperformed all other brands, earning an average score of 65. Luxury car buyers might expect a better dealership experience, but Mazda, a non-luxury brand, placed second with 64.

The worst dealership experience? Fiat owners. Fiat dealerships earned an average score of just 44.

Scores By Brand

Brand	Satisfaction Score (Out of 100)
Acura	65
Mazda	64
Lexus	63
Infiniti	61
Volkswagen	61
Buick	60
Cadillac	60
Toyota	60
Ford	59
Honda	59
Mini	59
Subaru	59
Volvo	59
BMW	58
GMC	58
Mercedes-Benz	58
Industry Average	58
Audi	57
Mitsubishi	57
Chevrolet	56
Kia	56
Jeep	55
Land Rover	55
Nissan	55
Porsche	53
Ram	53
Hyundai	52
Jaguar	51

Dodge	50
Genesis	49
Lincoln	49
Alfa Romeo	47
Chrysler	47
Polestar	47
Fiat	44

Ford Gives You a Time Estimate, Porsche Gives You a Loaner

Different brands have different strengths.

Forty-five percent of Porsche dealers offered customers a loaner car during their appointment. Just 1% of Mitsubishi dealers did the same, Pied Piper says.

Ford dealers told customers how long service would take 38% of the time. Polestar did the same “less than one percent of the time on average.”

The data matter because how owners feel about their car changes based on how they feel about the dealership that services it, the researchers say.

“Satisfied service customers are more likely to be long-time loyal customers not only for service work, but also when it’s time to buy another vehicle,” says Pied Piper CEO Fran O’Hagan.