

Crazy dealership stories

If you think your dealership is bad...

By TRENT HUMMEL

IN THE SPRING issue of *Western Equipment Dealer*, I wrote about “5 Key Areas that Separate Average and Great Dealerships.”

After a dealer friend read the article, he asked what odd or funny things have trainers for WEDA's Dealer Institute experienced in dealerships. Following are a few of the things we've encountered.

Hot and heavy

There was a deal being quoted by multiple dealerships. The customer stopped in to visit with one of the quoting salesmen. The salesman was not in. The dealership's owner steered the customer into his office.

The owner said, “We will beat the lowest quote you have by \$10,000 but you have to show me the quote.” The customer said that sounded like a good deal. He would show the quote but only if he could hide who the low quote was from. The dealer agreed. The quote was shown. As agreed, the owner drafted a sales contract for \$10,000 less while the customer wrote a check.

After signing, the owner asked if he could see who the low quote was from. The customer decided he could since their deal was done. As the quote sheet was shown, the owner realized the quote was from his salesman.

Wash away the energy

In the busy spring season, the service department had multiple on-farm repairs to complete. The service manager mapped out the farms. With the technicians' in-

put, a guesstimate was made of how long a technician would be at each farm. The service manager set up a full day of two technicians going in separate trucks in opposite directions. They informed all the customers what time to expect the technician, including how each farmer was sharing travel time costs.

On the morning of the big service day, the owner noticed the service trucks pulling out of the shop. He stopped both trucks. He gathered up the technicians and service manager. The owner decided the trucks looked dusty and he wanted them washed before leaving the yard. It was spring, the trucks were not muddy but dusty.

The service people explained the full day of multiple stops and planned on-site estimates of arrival times. The owner would have none of it. They waited for the pressure wash man to clean the trucks, which included the owner's approval. A one-hour delay turned an organized day into a mess.

Who's the sinner?

An owner informs our trainer that God specifically put the dealership in his hands. The owner then said, “Everyone working here is a sinner. God wants me to own this dealership in order for me to shepherd the sinners to Heaven.” We have never seen broken culture or employee turnover at this level.



Conceal and carry

A WEDA trainer was asked to attend a dealership's managers' meeting. Our trainer was to assess the meeting format, progress toward goals, attendees, topics, etc. He witnessed every agenda item turn into a screaming heated argument. No productivity whatsoever. Mostly hard feelings and grudges walked out of the meeting.

After the meeting, a manager took our trainer aside. The manager informed our trainer not to feel uncomfortable in their meetings since he brings his handgun to meetings just in case someone gets out of hand.

From the mouths of babes

Grandpa Roy brought his four-year-old grandson into the dealership. Grandpa and grandson sat in the dealer's office working on a deal. Sitting still for an active four-year-old has a limited shelf life. The boy climbed over the chair, under the chair, up the wall, knocked over the coat stand – an energetic kid.

The grandpa, who couldn't hear well, tried to settle down the boy while the dealer worked up a quote. The dealer had to use his loud voice in order for grandpa to hear. Most the time, everything was repeated two or three times.



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is a fourth-generation agricultural equipment dealer and a leader in the equipment industry.



“Look, mister, do I need to get on this desk, pull your underwear over your head and honk your nose?”

After 20 minutes of this office rodeo, the grandson popped his head from the front of the desk, looked the dealer square in the eye and said, “Look, mister, do I need to get on this desk, pull your underwear over your head and honk your nose?”

Sweeping changes

It was a nice fall harvest day... the morning started out with a flood of parts/service calls. Every employee was running flat out and getting busier by the hour. Midmorning, the owner arrived with a bunch of new brooms.

The owner rounded up all of his employees. He explained that when leaving the yard the night before, he noticed pebbles on the dealership's outside service pad. He didn't like that. He bought brooms for every employee and demanded the pad be swept right then. It did not matter if a technician was on a unit-down service repair or if parts customers were at the counter – every employee had to sweep.

A reason to switch brands

During a busy season, the salesmen were complaining about sold units not getting set up/delivered. Over the weekend, the owner thought of a solution. Monday morning, he informed the service manager that the only service work to be performed that week would be on sold wholegoods units.

This might work in January, but it's a disaster in July. The service manager was told if a customer repair or warranty job was performed that week, he would be fired. He did as he was told. It was a windfall for local competitive dealerships as customers traded their units for other brands during that week and the weeks/months that followed. The receptionist directed every customer complaint to the owner's mobile number.

Guilty? Who me?

A dealership's monthly cell phone invoice arrived... the owner periodically reviews invoices before accounting submits payment. This particular invoice was higher than normal, although the owner did not know what normal was since he only randomly reviews invoices.

The owner instructed the accounting department to have employees identify each long-distance number, which was a very big and time-consuming job, not only for accounting but for every employee. After weeks, every number but one was accounted for. The unidentified number had a \$2 charge. The owner was beside himself. He thought there was a thief under his roof. For a month, the owner consistently made snide comments regarding employees using his dealership's phones for personal long-distance calls.

A few weeks after all this, the owner's wife was in the store. She asked the accounting team what was up with the phone bill. She said her husband was sharing stories about employees stealing. Accounting explained and presented the number. The owner's wife claimed it as a number she and her husband called regarding a vacation they planned.

Something stinks

A customer owns two farms on opposite ends of the state. The owner has sons on each farm. The boys have a running joke of moving their dad's junk to each other's farm.

The dealership's trucker was loading a tractor to be delivered to one of the farms. The customer's son arrived at the dealership with his dad's beat up old deep freezer. He asked the trucker if the freezer could ride on the load to the other farm. The son loaded and tied down the freezer while the trucker was in the store getting the tractor paperwork.

The trucker was stopped at a weigh station. His truck was selected for a full truck/trailer inspection. The officer walked around the back of the trailer and that was the end of the inspection. The officer told the driver he was free to go. The freezer had a dead skunk in it. The smell was growing as the day heated up.

There was supposedly logical thought behind these actions in these stories. Of course, most of us would never go down these roads... and it's just good business not to. **WED**

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