

HOW TO RETAIN CUSTOMERS FOR LIFE BY SELLING TIRES

EXPLORING THE (TREAD) DEPTHS

BY ALAN HAGERTY

When most people think of their dealership's Fixed Ops Department, they don't necessarily think of the place where they buy their tires. Indeed, the mention of Fixed Operations Departments is more likely to evoke images of warranty service and timing belt replacement. But not getting serious about selling tires is a big mistake and that mistake could be costing you more than just the profits from tire sales themselves.

Consumers of today are used to the experience of one-stop shopping. If vehicle owners don't feel that they can get their desired service and have a positive tire buying experience in your dealership, chances are they'll go somewhere else altogether. So how can Fixed Ops Departments capture these consumers?

Many of the traditional tire-selling methods and strengths employed by tire retailers (such as large inventories and highly-seasoned tire Advisors) are not feasible for Fixed Ops Departments. Car count is too high, and bottlenecking in the Service drive must be avoided at all cost. Then there's the question of quoting the tire replacement. Many Service Advisors simply aren't as comfortable pointing out the need for a tire replacement as they are recommending a battery replacement.



Sounds like a daunting problem, doesn't it?

The solution that some of the most forward-thinking Fixed Ops Departments have come up with involves a spectrum of tread depth measurement technologies. There are several advantages to focusing on tread depth when trying to sell tires. Tread depth is quantifiable and there's an understood legal limit, which builds huge credibility when suggesting tire replacement. Tread depth is visual; even the most non-technical consumer can tell the difference between a new tire and a worn tire in terms of tread depth. And frankly, tread depth has been advertised to vehicle-owners well for a long time; consumers just understand it better.

By deciding which tread depth measurement tool makes sense for your store, you can help boost tire sales and retain your Service customers.

Level 1: Manual Tread Depth Measurement

Using manual tread depth gauges to measure tread depth is by far the most common tread depth measurement method. Manual tread depth gauges are beneficial in that they are cost effective and familiar to most any Technician. However, measurements from a manual tread depth gauge can vary depending on who is measuring, which leads to inconsistencies. Being human, Technicians are more likely to measure the tire in easily accessible places, like the outside. But what if excessive tread wear is on the inside of the tire? Not only has this replacement opportunity gone unnoticed, but that customer is driving on potentially dangerous tires.

There's also no way to transmit manual tread depth gauge results, so the Technician must manually record results at each tire. Finally, manual tread depth gauges are slow and require many trips around the vehicle for thorough analysis. With manual tread depth gauges, you also run the risk of Technicians simply not wanting to use them, which leads to missed opportunities.



Welcome to Hunter Engineering Co.
11250 Hunter Drive
Bridgeton, MO 63044
(314) 731-3020

M-F: 8:15 am - 5:00 pm
Sa: Closed
Su: Closed
Alex Nicholas, Service Manager

Complimentary Vehicle Inspection 11/04/14 9:00 AM



Nissan 2012 Altima Sedan 215/55R17



Last in Date: 10/29/14 3:17:45 PM



Four Wheel Alignment **FAILED**

✓ Front Total Toe

✗ Rear Total Toe

✓ Front Camber

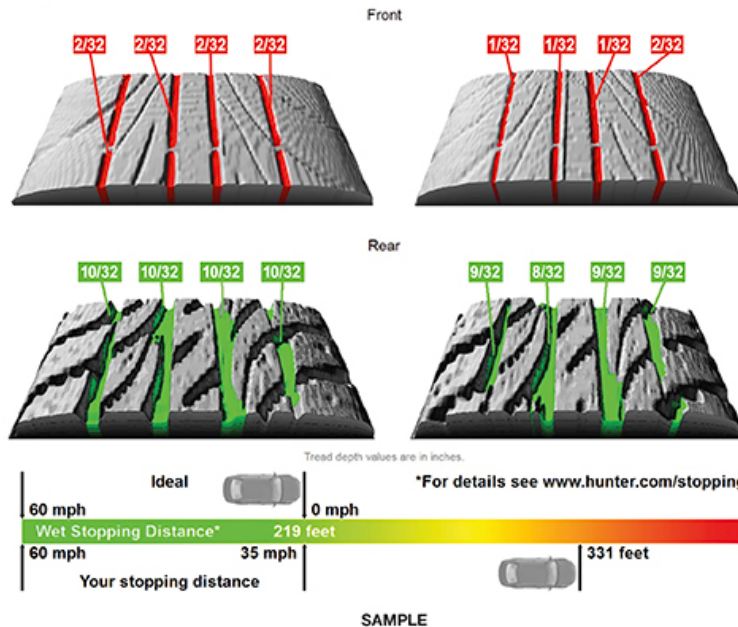
✓ Rear Camber



Recommend an All Wheel Alignment for Added Tire Life, Fuel Economy and Safety



Tire Tread Depth **FAILED**



From a customer service standpoint, manual tread depth measurements are recorded and shown to customers to show a need for tire replacement. This is a step in the right direction, but it still makes customers feel like they have to "take your word for it" when buying tires. However, capturing some tread depth information is better than nothing at all and results can effectively be used to sell more tires.

Level 2: Digital Tread Depth Measurement

A much more accurate alternative to

manual tread depth gauges are digital tread depth gauges, which provide a quick and easy assessment of tire conditions. Digital tread depth gauges communicate wirelessly with the alignment console and measurements are displayed on the screen as they are collected. Digital tread depth gauges eliminate the need for manual recording and entry of tread depth measurements and ensure consistency across operators. While digital tread depth gauges are faster than manual gauge alternatives, they still require a trip around the vehicle, which could lead to backup in the Service drive.

Digital tread depth gauges are also often used in the back shop after the customer has left the dealership. This is a missed opportunity to capture the customer's attention while you have them in your store, thereby strengthening the selling process. Like manual tread depth gauges, you still may run the risk that Technicians simply won't use this tool, meaning that you could be missing valuable opportunities to sell tires.

Because digital tread depth gauges can transmit results to the alignment console, tread depth measurements are displayed on an easy-to-understand printout for customers. Vehicle owners are much more likely to trust the recommended tire replacement when faced with a printout.

“DRIVE-OVER
TREAD DEPTH
MEASUREMENT
PROVIDES THE
ABSOLUTE FASTEST,
MOST ACCURATE
AND MOST SEAMLESS
METHOD OF
TREAD DEPTH
MEASUREMENT
COLLECTION.”

Level 3: Drive-Over Tread Depth Measurement

Drive-over tread depth measurement provides the absolute fastest, most accurate and most seamless method of tread depth measurement collection. The best drive-over tread depth measurement system collects over 280,000 data points to automatically measure the tread of each tire in just ten seconds. The most advanced of today's drive-over tread depth systems is available in surface mount or flush mount configurations, to suit any Service drive need. No Technician is needed to capture tread measurements, allowing your Service Department to capture all tire replacement opportunities without backup in the Service drive.



The most advanced drive-over tread depth system today generates a printout that actually contains a 3D model of the customer's exact tread and recommends replacement accordingly. It also contains a diagram that shows how wet weather stopping distance increases as tire tread depth decreases. Diagrams such as this are a huge help at the point-of-sale and visually show the vehicle owner why proper tread depth is so important. These advanced drive-over tread depth systems also store a customer's tread depth records for use in your Fixed Ops Department's marketing efforts.

By deciding what tread depth measurement tool is right for your Service Department, you can help ensure that your customer's feel comfortable buying tires from you. When customers view you as a full-service location, they are more inclined to come to you for all of their Service needs. This not only leads to a healthier bottom line, but also truly builds customer loyalty and retention.

Focusing on tire tread depth when selling tires is a perfect way to combat both consumer skepticism and Service Advisor lack of confidence.

Today's most advanced tread depth measurement tool is undoubtedly drive-over tread depth systems. The most powerful of these drive-over tread depth systems measures up to six measurements per tire to accurately capture information on all vehicle traffic in your Service drive. By producing a printout with an actual 3D model of the customer's tread, the drive-over tread depth system truly becomes a partner in your business and helps increase process transparency and customer satisfaction. Today's consumers expect fast, convenient and efficient service, so the time to provide a one-stop-shopping Service experience is now!



Alan Hagerty is Inspection Product Manager at Hunter Engineering. Mr. Hagerty was previously a Sales Representative for Hunter Engineering in the Saint Louis area.