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MEN, WOMEN EXHIBIT DIFFERENT PARTS BUYING AND SELLING TENDENCIES

In light of the recent outbreaks of violent riots, errant gunmen, obvious brutality inflicted by those in command, and the political finger pointing of our national leaders, I want to draw some comparison to our industry's faux pas. Since we don't typically destroy police cars in parking lots, shoot each other for no apparent reason (however, in West Virginia the defense of "he needed killin" is a sometimes regarded as justifiable homicide), and no owner of parts store or service center is dumb enough to run for President, the only thing that resembles the madness of the world within our industry is men vs. women.

Aside from the obvious anatomical differences; there are other intriguing things as to how we each respectively handle our business. Ironically, the same misconceptions about the automotive service and parts industry and issues regarding gender share a few things in common with racial tensions, the "Girls Gone Wild" video series and soccer hooligans.

The tradition and history of our industry has created men as the heir apparent, but the "her appearance" is appreciated much more appropriately in certain work and customer relationships.

The old saying and popular book title "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus" illustrates how we think of each other. How we rationalize our differences might be slightly based on hormones or testosterone, but not entirely. In the automotive world these differences could be explained without the gender bias by saying, "Men have short dirty fingernails, women have longer dirty fingernails." The common component is greasy hands. Here are some other noticeable differences between female and male customers.

Male customers tend to buy "price" much more than women. Women have a tendency to buy "value" and safety. A man will come in and buy only a set of brake pads for a

vehicle that obviously needs rotors, calipers, ball joints, and a CV shaft with two lug nuts holding the wheels on the car, and then complain of a pedal pulsation after they've been installed, insisting we give him a new set of brake pads for free because the ones he just got are defective.

His wife can bring the same vehicle in for service, and after informing her of the same problems she will allow us to actually fix the vehicle. Then when she returns home, her husband gets mad, telling her she was taken advantage of and none of the other stuff needed replaced.

As a result, the husband now thinks we are a bunch of crooks, and his wife has a complex about buying parts or getting her car serviced, from anyone, but tells everyone she knows that she got ripped off by us. Now this is certainly not representative of all men and women, yet the stigma is still there.

As much as the inaccurate perception annoys me, it's wise of us to realize there is not a lot we can do about the customers we serve. Men like to be the heroes, women like to be the damsels in distress and both stereotypes pivot on our genetically programmed automotive industry frailties. Did I just say frailties? What could those possibly be? For the "Mr. Know It All" we are often too quick to "holster our weapon" of knowledge to avoid conflict and just give the guy what he asks for, not what he needs, and pray it won't come back to haunt us with endless amounts of warranty claims and incessant complaining and arguing about the technical aspects of a good brake job.

For women who say they know nothing about cars but claim that they always are getting ripped off, we are way too fast to reduce pricing or give away free services in an attempt to ease the uncertainty she may or may not feel about getting some repairs or parts for her car. Not to mention the fact we realize when she gets home, her husband (or partner, to be politically correct) is going to blow a gasket, pontificating that two lugs nuts are plenty and we were just trying to make more money.

Now let's take a look at female and male employees. An employee is an employee, right? Well, if we were an androgynous species I'd agree with that. The most interesting thing that I've noticed is that both men and women are difficult to manage.

Typical things are common issues for both sexes like, showing up on time, too many personal phone calls, long lunches, etc. A staff that is made up of all men or all women is a nightmare that will require psychotherapy or medication. The reason for this is that we are programmed genetically to establish a social hierarchy or a pecking order.

The original use of the term pecking order referred to the expression of dominance in chickens, the most stupid, nasty bird on our planet. Dominance in chickens is asserted by various behaviors, including pecking, which was used as a measure of dominance and leadership characteristics.

Wikipedia says, "Defense and aggression in the hen is accomplished with the beak."

This emphasis on pecking led many subsequent studies on fowl behavior to use it as a primary observation, however, it has been noted that roosters tend to leap and use their claws in conflicts. Thus, one can derive from this study that men jump to uneducated violent conclusions, and women peck or nag you to death. Both are bullying techniques.

Pecking order is a basic concept in social stratification and social hierarchy that has its counterparts in other species, especially humans.

Our industry is an interesting case study, and stereotypically representative of a bunch of free range chickens chasing after a grasshopper (our flighty customer that's also running amuck).

I've been in this business a long time and have noticed a lot of things regarding the sexes in the automotive aftermarket. I've seen overt political correctness. I've witnessed excessive incorrectness. I don't know if the chicken preceded the egg, and could really care less, but I do know without divine intervention, it takes one hen and one rooster to make an egg even if they peck and flog each other before, during and after the transaction.

The automotive parts and service industry is no different. Men and women are equally important as employees and customers for our long-term survival, and no less should be expected that our differences unite and cement us. A few other folks with differences could learn a few things from our industry stereotypes and quit complaining about the undeniable truths of fundamental existence. Exploitation of sex is inherent. We just can't help ourselves. Besides, when you go to KFC, do you really care if that chicken leg came from a hen or not? It all taste like chicken.

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