Working Effectively with Apprentices

## Guidance for Service Advisors

This guidance is for service advisors working in a dealership that employs service technician apprentices. Service advisors play a critical role in the success of an apprenticeship program. While advisors do not train apprentices directly, their dispatch decisions, communication, expectations, and tone strongly influence apprentice development, shop efficiency, customer satisfaction, and retention.

This document clarifies:

* The advisor’s role in supporting apprenticeship success
* How to protect CSI and throughput while apprentices learn
* How to communicate effectively with customers and technicians
* What advisors are and are not expected to manage

## Why Apprenticeships Matter to Advisors

A well-run apprenticeship program:

* Increases long-term shop capacity
* Reduces bottlenecks on senior technicians
* Improves consistency and quality over time
* Lowers advisor stress caused by chronic staffing shortages

In the short term, apprentices may slow some workflows. In the long term, they reduce fire drills, comebacks, and overloading of top technicians.

Advisors who understand this dynamic help the entire department succeed.

## Advisor Responsibilities When Working with Apprentices

1. **Support Structured Dispatching**

Apprentices must work on appropriate repair orders based on their development stage.

Advisors are expected to:

* Follow established dispatch rules for apprentice work
* Avoid assigning complex or time-critical jobs to apprentices unless approved
* Respect mentor and foreman direction regarding RO assignment

Improper dispatching is one of the fastest ways to damage an apprenticeship program.

1. **Manage Customer Expectations Thoughtfully**

Customers do not need to know internal training details, but they do expect quality and transparency.

Best practices:

* Focus conversations on dealership standards and quality control
* Avoid language that implies inexperience or experimentation
* Reinforce that all work is reviewed and verified

Examples:

* “Your vehicle will be handled by our service team and inspected before delivery.”
* “We follow standardized procedures and conduct quality checks on every repair.”

1. **Protect Quality Over Speed**

Early-stage apprentices require more time.

Advisors should:

* Avoid over-promising completion times on apprentice-involved work
* Build reasonable buffers into estimates when appropriate
* Coordinate with foremen or mentors if timing is critical

Rushing apprentices increases comebacks, CSI risk, and advisor rework.

1. **Communicate Clearly with Mentors and Foremen**

If concerns arise regarding repair progress, quality issues, or repeated delays, advisors should:

* Communicate directly with the foreman or mentor
* Avoid bypassing training structure to “get it done faster”
* Document concerns factually, not emotionally

Clear communication prevents escalation and blame.

1. **Reinforce Professional Standards**

Advisors set the emotional tone between the front and back of the house.

Expected behaviors:

* Treat apprentices with respect
* Avoid sarcasm, labeling, or dismissive language
* Reinforce professionalism in all interactions

Apprentices who feel respected engage more and make fewer mistakes.

## What Service Advisors Are *Not* Responsible For

Service advisors are not expected to:

* Train apprentices on technical tasks
* Evaluate apprentice technical competency
* Decide when an apprentice is ready for certain work
* Discipline apprentices for performance issues

Those responsibilities belong to mentors, foremen, and service leadership.

## Common Situations & Advisor Guidance

### “This job is taking too long.”

* Check with the mentor or foreman before escalating
* Confirm whether apprentice involvement is contributing
* Adjust customer communication as needed

### “The customer is unhappy and wants answers.”

* Focus on process, quality, and verification
* Avoid attributing delays or issues to training status

### “I need this done now.”

* Escalate to the foreman to determine reassignment or support
* Do not independently bypass the training structure

## How Advisor Behavior Impacts the Program

Advisor actions influence:

* Apprentice confidence and retention
* Shop morale and collaboration
* Customer trust and CSI
* Long-term service capacity

Short-term pressure that undermines training creates long-term advisor stress.

## Final Expectations

Working in a dealership with apprentices means:

* Dispatch discipline matters
* Quality and communication come before speed
* Respect is required in all interactions
* Long-term thinking benefits short-term performance

A successful apprenticeship program makes the advisor role easier over time, not harder.

Questions or concerns about apprentice-related work should be directed to:  
[Service Manager / Foreman Name]

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