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January 2007

Circulation 20,000 Readership 60,000

<http://www.moderncarcare.com/articles/711feat1.html>

Add Profit with Window Film

Train employees to perform this service

By Jon Mitchell

Car-care center owners are always looking for ways to add profitable growth to their businesses, but sometimes they fail to see what is right in front of them.

Whether you live on the East or West coast or anywhere in between, we are all spending considerably more time in our cars than we have in the past. As heat waves across the country become more common and intense, we are noticing just how hot and uninviting our vehicles can get during these hot summer months. You're not the only one experiencing this problem. Your customers are feeling the heat too, and this is where window film comes into the picture.



The opportunity

In North America alone, window-film installers sell more than \$120 million worth of window film each year to consumers who want to improve their driving climate and seek protection from the damaging effects of the sun on their skin and interior cabin space. Currently, there are more than 5,000 automotive-window-film dealers in the United States and the number continues to grow daily because of the increase in demand over the years. If you are already participating in one of the automotive segments by running a carwash, detail shop or other automotive business, you are in a great position to leverage your existing setup and customer base to diversify into window film.



Once you decide to offer window film, you have a few things to consider. The shop location or assigned floor space is definitely at the top in order of importance since it will affect overall efficiency and productivity of the shop in the long run. It's important to have a dedicated work space, which should be large enough for one to two cars and allow for all the doors to be open with room to work around the car. This space should also be enclosed; tents in the parking lot will not work. A clean environment is paramount to success.

While determining the shop location is important, you also need a product to sell. Finding a window-film supplier should be more about finding a business partner rather than just looking for product to sell. What do you look for in a film provider? In a nutshell, a well-established company that enjoys proving its success every day by offering high-quality product lines that have excellent warranties with great customer service.



Types of window film

Determining film quality as well as what is right for your customers is not an easy task, but a brief overview of the types of window film will go a long way in your understanding of the business. Generally, there have been two types

of window film for many years; however, as technology progresses and customers' requirements change, so too does window film.

Non-reflective (NR) or non-metallized window film is fairly straight-forward. These films contain no metal layer. They get their color from either a dyeing process or by using colored raw polyester material prior to being made into film. This film works by reducing light transmission, through absorption, which reduces heat entering vehicle windows. Premium NR window film rejects up to about 40 percent of the solar energy. It does so at the expense of visible light, allowing only 5 percent of the sun's natural light to enter the vehicle, which creates a dark window.

Metallized or High Performance (HP) film is exactly that, a film that contains a metal. This can be an all-metal film or used in combination with one of the nonmetallized films to create a hybrid window film. HP film is the most common type of automotive window film available. The advantages of using metallized film include superior heat rejection and durability. These films experience enhanced heat rejection through the use of the metal layer and achieve solar heat rejection of approximately 60 percent, but with less than 10 percent of light transmission the windows still remain very dark.

Nanotechnology is a recent advancement in automotive window film. These films achieve very high heat rejection (40 percent) in combination with maintaining an extremely high level of visible light (70 percent) transmission, which makes this film appealing to a wider audience that normally would not consider window film as a solution to the overheated interior of their vehicle.

Investment needed

The last few hurdles focus on the capital resources available to you. The amount of capital needed to get going will depend on how professional you want to present yourself and who is available to do the actual film installation. In determining how your shop is going to present itself, your film supplier should be able to help with a shop layout, point-of-purchase material, posters and tools to get you started in the right direction. If you are unable to do the work yourself or just do not want to, there may be other options available.

Tinting schools are designed to train someone with no experience by teaching him the basic skills needed to install window film on most cars in just one week. The most difficult part in training any installer is cutting the patterns for the various sizes and shapes of windows found on cars and trucks today. This problem can be solved with electronic film-cutting systems, which accurately cut patterns for an entire car in only a few minutes. While the computer is cutting the pattern, the installer can prep the windows for installation, thus increasing shop productivity and profit. Think of this tool as the employee who never gets sick, never complains and never asks for a day off.

Profit potential

Making profit is the goal of any business, so how do you ensure that you will run a profitable window-film operation? Know your target audience and make certain you have the right product on hand.

Once you have the product, you need to decide how much to charge for the service. Prices vary widely depending on market areas, but the principles remain the same regardless of location. Using multiple product lines allows shops to generate additional income by upselling. This is not a bait-and-switch tactic. It allows the opportunity to present the customer with various options while in your store.

Let's say you have done your research and decided to carry three product lines—NR, HP and Nanotechnology film. In terms of cost, the NR line is the most inexpensive and the Nanotechnology window film costs the most.

The average small, four-door car will use about \$30 of NR material. If tinted in HP film, it would require \$35 of material. What should the customer pay? This is heavily dependent on your market area. As a general

guide, NR film is installed on small, four-door cars in the \$150 to \$200 range. The HP film is slightly higher, priced at \$200 to \$300. You can charge \$400 to \$600 for Nanotechnology films.

Using the lesser of the average ticket prices, let's figure out how much profit there is in installing automotive window film. The beginner installer should easily be able to tint one car in two to three hours. Being conservative, we will say you can only tint two cars per day, five days a week, totaling 10 cars per week. If half of the cars are sold in NR ($5 \times \$150 = \750) and the remaining in HP ($5 \times \$200 = \$1,000$) at the end of one week you have \$1,750 in the bank. Based on the cost of the NR film ($5 \times \$30 = \150) and the HP film ($5 \times \$35 = \175) your total materials cost is about \$325. Subtract this from \$1,750 sales and the gross profit for one week is about \$1,425. Of course you have to pay for your installer as well, but even at \$10 an hour working 40 hours a week you can still profit by more than \$4,000 a month. I did not calculate other overhead costs since we are assuming you are already running a complementary line of car-care business.

The bottom line is that even with only a couple of cars a day, you can nicely supplement your existing revenues. Now imagine doing three, four or five cars a day, which is completely possible for an experienced installer.

While offering window-film installation may not be an attractive business alternative for everyone, if you are already in the car-care business, it is a proven way for you to generate incremental profitable revenue growth by leveraging your existing infrastructure/setup and customer base.

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