On a scale of 1 to 10. how annoying are post-service surveys?

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On a scale of 1 to 10, how annoying are post-service surveys?

By Professor Jim Saker

It had to happen. The MoT was due and the car needed a service. However, six weeks before any of this had to be done, I had received a text, an email and a letter from my dealer, all informing me to ring a particular number to ensure I remain legal and safe.

As this barrage of communication arrived just before Christmas, I was a little distracted. I couldn’t remember seeing the dealership during the Yuletide season in previous years. So I rang up in a slight panic, thinking I had somehow missed a significant date.

Having ascertained this was in fact just a very prior warning, I relaxed and said I would book the car in the New Year. This response obviously did not satisfy the insatiable appetite of the CRM system, as I then received another email and text telling me the same message.

Having eventually given in to the pressure, I booked the car in and dutifully left the vehicle on the allotted day. I had been told of the expected expense in advance and happily spoke to the after-sales service receptionist, who informed me that the car was ready for collection. Over the phone, I was told what had been done and the costs involved, all of which matched the estimate given before. The car was ready at the expected time; it had been cleaned and everything in the world, or at least the car, was good.

As I drove home, I had a warm feeling about my friends at the dealership, who had remembered my name and treated me with their usual level of care and courtesy.

It started a few days later; I received a text from the dealer entitled ‘Courtesy Contact’, which read: ‘Were checking everything’s’ (I assume CRM systems cannot do apostrophes ok following your vehicles [no punctuation] recent visit. Also confirming that we gave you 10 out of 10 service this time so would recommend us to friends and family and re-use us in the future.’

I answered the question as fully as I could, with glowing praise, thinking that my dealership was bound to get a bonus payment.

Next came: ‘On a scale of 1 to 10, would you recommend this dealership to friends and family?’ That was a bit tricky, as most of my friends don’t drive that franchise. How should I score this?

I whacked down 10 again, only to be asked why I’d given that score. Why do you think? I had now started to talk to the laptop screen! I asked him to consider the dealer’s history. Because I hate my friends!

I decided to write “please see previous answer.”

Next came: ‘On a scale of 1 to 10, would I use this dealership again? Again a 10 and, losing the will to live, I again referred the questionnaire to the previous answer.

I thought I was done, but, unfortunately, up came a box asking if I had further comments. Irresistible, I filled it in, referring to pointlessly satisfaction questionnaires. I received a final farewell from the manufacturer, having vented my spleen.

This was a mistake. The CRM system wasn’t satisfied with my rant so, as punishment, I received a courtesy call from the manufacturer, asking how I found my service.

I politely told the caller about their questionnaire and that I was so delighted with my dealership that I would leave something in my will to the service receptionist and make sure I put £20 in the BEN envelope at the IMI dinner rather than the cheeky £5 I normally try to slip in. Our conversation over, I waited expectantly for a questionnaire on whether I was completely satisfied with the phone call.

‘The service side is fine, it’s the aftermath’

It all went quiet until the following day, when I received an email from the dealership saying both front wiper blades were missing and that I required new blades. A sense of dread came over me. I was not in a fit mental state to face another self-reflective analysis of my state of satisfaction. The service side is fine, it’s the aftermath. I have decided that I will only take my car into the dealership if firstly they don’t tell the manufacturer and secondly they give me the number of a good therapist.

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Professor Jim Saker is director of the Centre for Automotive Management at Loughborough University’s Business School and an AM Awards judge. He has been involved in the automotive industry for more than 20 years.