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**Car Repair Prices: The Dim Underworld Of Automotive Service**

**By Theodore Olson**

Most know the most glaring auto repair pricing abuses: Service centers overcharging \$100's even \$1000's for repairs, or charging for repairs that were never done at all.

To be sure, this still happens every day. However, there are many other techniques which involve flying just low enough to avoid detection.

The savvy service centers increase the price so as not to set off any alarms. It has become so common that it's not just an accepted industry practice, but even service customers have accepted paying higher prices.

Knowing how ingrained price-gouging is within the automotive service industry, it's shocking (although understandable) that even service customers have succumbed to excessive car repair prices. I frequently hear service customers' state:

"Yeah, I know I was ripped off, but my car's fixed now." Or, "I know they charge too much, but they're convenient."

This is insane! To accept auto repair price-gouging is to allow its continuation. The difficult part, of course, is how to stop it. Given that the automotive service industry is so big and powerful (and so frightfully necessary) how does one battle such a force?

Perhaps the first thing to understand is the degree to which this type of stealth-like price-gouging occurs. A two-decade undercover investigation has revealed that 98% of all repair shops (dealerships, local shops, and franchises) are price-gouging their customers in one form or another.

The following exchange, between a service manager and service advisor, provides an idea of the "scope of scamming" below the radar.

A service advisor asked his manager how to bill more hours per month, which is another way of asking how the advisor can make more money. The service manager casually stated:

"Simply add an additional two tenths to every ticket you write."

In other words, every customer this service advisor "helps," he was instructed by a superior to add a "little" extra. So if the labor rate is \$100 per hour two tenths would equal \$20. Rather than pay \$100 per hour, the service customer would actually pay \$120.

\$20 doesn't sound like much compared to the gross injustices we all know. However, whether it's an overcharge of two cents or \$20, it's too much.

If you visit a shop practicing this strategy alone (there are hundreds of strategies, many applied simultaneously), you may end up paying over a \$100 or more by year's end.

What's really shocking is that being ripped off \$100 over a year's time is actually minor!

Try \$500–\$5000

Theodore P. Olson (Ted) holds extensive certifications from Mercedes–Benz, Toyota, GM, and ASE. He is the author of eight books and numerous articles on the automotive service industry.

<http://www.repairtrust.com>

## **Auto Sales And Auto Service: Who Rips You Off More?**

### **By Theodore Olson**

Everybody hates car salesman. They talk too fast, use too many clichés, and are generally exasperating. There's nothing worse than being verbally romanced only to find out you were ripped-off—or is there?

How about getting ripped-off repeatedly? How about getting ripped-off repeatedly for years? How about never even knowing you were ripped-off, repeatedly, and for years?

Welcome to service! When it comes to swindling, automotive service representatives are the real experts. They have more experience, and way more opportunity to rip you off.

A car salesman has only a few chances to rip you off provided you even engage in negotiations. There's the price of the car, financing, leasing, accessories/options, extended warranties, your trade-in, and the general bull that wafts from the salesman's mouth.

You should also watch out for the finance manager. Today's finance folks aren't just number crunchers, they're salesmen in disguise. This is where you'll be encouraged to buy the extended warranty and a host of other accessories that can all be packaged up nicely into your financing.

Car sales rip-off attempts are easily thwarted. Number one, you can just walk away! Also, there are

## Car Repair Prices: The Dim Underworld Of Automotive Service

numerous resources on how to buy a car without losing your shirt. If you're interested, visit the RepairTrust resource link @

[www.repairtrust.com](http://www.repairtrust.com)

and you'll find several sites that will tell you

everything you want to know about buying, trading, leasing, financing, new, used...etc.

It's quite different in the world of car repair. Your car needs service. You HAVE to deal with a service representative, like it or not.

The folks in the dim underworld of automotive service are well-trained in the art of ripping people off. They're not the feeding-frenzied, thrashing sharks of sales that are easy to spot.

No, service representatives are the Great Whites. They primarily hunt alone, hiding in the murky waters of service, striking without warning.

What's really scary is that the service industry is infested with Great Whites. Traditional tips and suggestions to avoid their attacks don't work. This is evidenced by the fact that service customers are scammed "tens of billions of dollars every year."

Information is the key to STOP a Great White. If one knows who, what, when, where, why, and how it hunts, one can take control.

Importantly, "Sharks are not mindless eating machines." The Great Whites of the service industry are experienced and smart. There are so many attacks from so many different directions, and new technologies provide fresh chum daily.

With auto repair, technology creates confusion. Technology creates ripples and waves, making it

difficult to see below the surface of even simple auto repairs.

The Great White can sense the anxiety of a service customer, like it can a struggling swimmer. In the midst of this confusion, the waters of service get even murkier, and SPLASH—it's cost you an arm and a leg.

In today's service environment, the service customer needs protection, and needs to be empowered with accurate information and powerful tools before even entering the waters. There's no need to lose any limbs, ever!

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