

BULLETIN

Customer



Don't Buy Auto Repair Over the Phone

Don't rely solely on the Better Business Bureau or other consumer agencies to find out if a shop is honest (or qualified). The only information you'll receive is how many unsettled complaints they have on the shop in question. A dishonest shop knows that if he gets caught cheating, he had better make a settlement immediately if he wants to continue cheating. Sound a little strange? Let me explain.

Ninety-nine percent of the people who get cheated aren't even aware of it. The smart cheater knows that. He knows percentages are in his favor. If he's caught, he'll return the money or settle the complaint immediately; therefore, no unsettled complaint on file. Let's carry it a step further. Ninety-nine percent of the people who think they got cheated, really didn't. There is a big difference between fraud and incompetency.

If you look it up in your dictionary you'll find a 'fraud' is a person who willfully cheats or deceives others.

'Incompetent': lacking in ability or skills. Totally different, right? ...but not to most consumers. They're aware of only one thing...they didn't get what they paid for. I can assure you that very few garages are actually fraudulent, and willfully cheat or deceived. Incompetent? Well, I'll admit there are some shops lacking in knowledge and skills.

A customer has an exhaust noise and calls a muffler shop and asks "How much to install a new muffler on my 1992 Ford?" The shop owner says \$100.

Customer: "When can you do it?" The owner says "At 2 this afternoon." So at 2 o'clock the customer drives into the muffler shop. The customer says "Hi, I called about the muffler for the '92 Ford."

The owner says "Okay, we'll get it right in." The owner calls one of his mechanics: "Hey, Charlie, put in a new muffler on the '92 Ford next." Charlie gets the car in the air and the exhaust pipe has pulled out of the muffler (that's where all the noise was coming from).

Charlie disconnects the other end and puts a new muffler on. There may not be a thing wrong with the old one, but you bought a new one. The shop owner didn't sell you a new one, you bought a new one.

You told him what you wanted and that was your mistake. Had that same customer driven into that shop and said, "I have an exhaust noise. Will you check it out and tell me how much it will cost to fix it?" A totally different transaction would have occurred. The owner would have said: "Hey, Charlie, get this '92 on the hoist and see what needs to be done to correct that exhaust noise." Charlie would have put it on the lift, checked it, gone to the shop owner and said, "The exhaust pipe is pulled out of the muffler. Owner says, "What will it take to fix it?" Charlie says "I can weld it or just put on a new clamp." See the difference? If the owner had said, "you needed a new muffler" that would have been fraud. But that owner will sell you anything you want to buy, and he cannot be accused of cheating you. Have you ever gone into an appliance store and said, "I want to buy a new TV" or refrigerator and have the salesman say, "What's wrong with your old one?" I never have.

Auto repair shops are no different. If you want to buy a transmission, they'll sell you one. If you want to buy a turn-up, they'll sell you one.

Put the "monkey" on the shop's back. Let him do the diagnosing and if you don't think he diagnosed it correctly, get a second opinion.

Click here to find an [ATRA Member Shop](#) in your area.

