

SERVICE QUARTERLY



December
1995
\$10

An official publication of the Service Station Dealers Association of Michigan

Happy Holidays



The State Christmas Tree in front of the State Capitol Building is one of the great traditions in Michigan. Each year the tree is donated by a Michigan family to be dressed in thousands of lights. The official tree lighting this year was November 17.

The staff at SSDA wish all our members and their families the happiest holiday season. Remember in the new year, if there is anything we can do for you just call us at (517) 484-4096.

Service Quarterly lauded in national awards program

Service Quarterly magazine received an honorable mention for Most Improved Magazine from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). SSDA entered **SQ** in ASAE's Gold Circle Awards program for 1995. Out of 45 magazines from across the country, **SQ** was one of six honored. The awards were presented this month at ASAE's annual management conference in Chicago.

Over the last year and a half SSDA staff have been working hard to update **Service Quarterly** and make it more beneficial to our readers. We are proud ASAE has recognized our efforts in design, writing and overall content. We'd like to know what you think too. If you have any comments or suggestions, please call Amy at SSDA at (517) 484-4096.

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President's Corner

Dennis Sidorski, SSDA-MI President

A look at our association's past reminds us of the strength in the future



I want to thank recent retirees Mr. Schlitt and Mr. Souder for serving us for so many years.

Do you know who Rankin Peck is?

I'll admit it's a name I haven't thought about in a long time. Mr. Peck devoted much of his career to Michigan dealers as Executive Director of the Michigan Retail Gasoline Dealers Association during the 1930s and 40s. But he was more than a paid employee of MRGDA. Mr. Peck lead the association (which is now of course known as SSDA) through impressive membership drives, gasoline rationing during WWII, and legislative

battles for fair pricing. He was also a driving force in the creation of the Service Station Dealers of America and Allied Trades, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary next year. Mr. Peck was the first president of what is now SSDA-AT, and he ran the association from the Michigan office in Detroit.

Recently, Mr. Peck was honored by SSDA-AT with a plaque and placement in their Hall of Fame. I was honored to accept the plaque on his behalf at the SSDA-AT Annual Convention in South Carolina in September. Thinking back on Mr. Peck's contributions to dealers, I was reminded of what a strong and interesting history our association has. Since 1929 Michigan dealers have been coming together to fight for and support each other. In 1939 Mr. Peck said in his Executive Director's column that when the dealers of Michigan realized the benefits of The Retail Gasoline Dealers Association of Michigan,

they responded in great numbers

Dealers have been responding to the call for years. We have been honored by the work of men like, longtime executive director Charles Shipley, past president Mick Kildea, and recent retirees Don Schlitt and Keith Souder.

When Mr. Schlitt retired recently from the SSDA board, he wrote a letter to the Board thanking the association for letting him serve for 26 years. I want to thank Mr. Schlitt for serving us for 26 years. Both Mr. Schlitt and Mr. Souder help prove SSDA is not just an organization a dealer joins, but an association a dealer helps shape.

Looking at SSDA's successful past inspires me to join with other dealers in continuing to support each other. I thank all of you who share your talent and experiences to make this association as strong as it has been for 66 years.

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Lending a hand

Dealers rise to the call of volunteerism in their communities

Student athletes benefit from dealer's generosity

Dealer Mike Egnatuk is a sports fan who puts his money where his mouth is. Each week during boys football and girls softball season Mike's station, Homer Shell, donates \$100 to the high school in the name of an outstanding Homer High School athlete. The money (\$1,500 a year) goes directly toward an athletic trainer. Mike's school spirit doesn't stop there. During football season he donates plastic footballs for the cheerleaders to throw in the stands; for basketball games his station donates mini-mega-phones for fans; on the academic side Mike purchases copies of the local newspaper for a class; and he sponsors the NFL Fact Find program that gives 4th graders football cards coupled with important life lessons.

Mike grew up in Homer, a small town southeast of Battle Creek. He said when he returned after being away 20 years, he wanted to let people know about the station. That's why he first started the school programs eight years ago. But he's found once you start giving back to the community, it's real hard to stop.



Top: Mike Egnatuk's street sign proudly honors the athletes of the week. Above: Mike and his wife Carol near some of their community recognition plaques and ribbons at the station.

Two Amoco dealers join the community in honoring their father

Brothers, and Amoco dealers, Pat and John Currie knew their father Richard was well liked in Big Rapids, but they never expected an entire night in honor of their dad.

Richard Currie was diagnosed with cancer recently. When civic leaders from Big Rapids approached him with a night of honor and fundraising for his medical bills, Richard graciously accepted but asked that all the money go toward the Hospice organization. Pat and John chipped in with the rest of the community in sponsoring the event. Pat said the community support has been overwhelming.

Not only did community leaders hold a night in Richard's honor, but the winning Ferris State University football team dedicated their season to him and gave him the game ball from their match against rival Grand Valley State University. Richard's influence reached to Buffalo, NY where the Buffalo Bills also presented him with a game ball.

John and Pat are optimistic that the support of the community and positive spirit of their father will get them all through this ordeal. They're just glad they could help.

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Donating one U-Haul of food isn't enough for Battle Creek dealer and community activist

Often dealer Jim Hazel's office at his Union 76 station in Battle Creek acts as a community service headquarters, where Jim raises money and plans events for schools, Boy Scout troops, city festivals and the needy of Calhoun County.

Jim sits on the boards of several civic organizations and he even founded his own charitable foundation in memory of his late daughter, Julie Hazel Norman. He raises money for scholarship funds, oversees a recycling program for the Boy Scouts, teaches Junior Achievement classes to grade school students, and participates in and helps sponsor Battle Creek's International Festival of Lights.

Most recently he donated a U-Haul truck to a local radio station's food drive. The goal was to fill the truck, but before the drive was half over, the truck had to be emptied so more food could fit. For Jim that's one example of the

community coming together.

"My dad always said 'you can't go to the well without remembering the well digger,'" Jim said.

A lifelong resident of Battle Creek, Jim has touched almost every aspect of the community with his dedication and unselfishness. His long list of community activities doesn't seem to be getting any shorter.



Dealer Jim Hazel, right, and Battle Creek radio personality Dan McClintock brave the elements to fill one of Hazel's U-Haul trucks with food for the needy.

Sunoco dealer moonlights as mayor

When the folks in Tecumseh want to see the mayor, they go to the Baker Brothers Sunoco station.

Mayor Jack Baker will most likely be under the hood of a car in his repair bays, but he's always happy to talk city politics. Jack has been mayor of Tecumseh for two years, after serving two years as pro-tem mayor and two as a council member. "It really gives me a sense of satisfaction to give back to the community," said Jack, a lifelong resident of Tecumseh.

He said he spends at least two hours a day with mayoral duties like civic ceremonies, community meetings and the regular council meetings. Although Jack says it's more of a "figure head" position, the responsibility of representing your hometown is no small job.



Tecumseh Mayor, and Sunoco dealer, Jack Baker, right, congratulates Police Chief Larry VanAlstine on Tecumseh's 30-year record of no pedestrian fatalities.

Road construction earns dealer 'Crystal Beaver' Award

When construction on Big Beaver Road in Troy created months of congestion and frustration, dealer Dennis Pellicci (whose station sits on the corner of Big Beaver and Crooks Road) worked hard at easing the burden with free coffee and newspapers, tips on getting through the mess of closed lanes and support to surrounding businesses on Big Beaver.

In November Big Beaver Road was fully opened after a major road widening project. To celebrate the occasion Jerry Mathers (TV's the Beaver) was on hand to present Dennis and other business owners with Crystal Beaver Awards for outstanding community service throughout the construction project.

Denny's Big Beaver Shell remained open 24 hours a day during the seven month long project. During that time the staff at Big Beaver Shell gave directions to motorists on getting through Big Beaver and promoted the businesses that were still open on the road. Dennis also recruited city dignitaries, including the mayor, to hand out free coffee, wash windshields and thank motorists for their patience during the construction. Denny's Big Beaver Shell was an anchor in the middle of a road that looked more like a war zone, Dennis said.

Now that the "war" is over, Dennis and the community are quite happy with all the extra traffic.



Your industry resource guide
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Customer service.

What does this mean?

Where do we go to find it? Is customer service the place in the far left corner of the store where items can be returned and credit balances are paid?

Not in today's business climate. Customer service today is something that happens with each and every customer through every sale. However, it is all too obvious when we *do not* receive good service.

Lack of customer service has unfortunately been brought to my attention over the last couple weeks through some complaints filed with SSDA and appropriate state agencies. In each case the customer was more disturbed by the response

they received from the station employee than the actual problem. In all three cases the customer was attempting to let the employee know there was a problem with the fuel dispensing equipment or the self serve apparatus

In one particular case, a gentleman chose the nozzle color coded to the mid grade product. While fueling, he noticed the color coded nozzles were in the wrong place and he was actually purchasing a premium product. When he stopped pumping, he checked other pumps and

found them all to fit the correct color coded scheme advertised. It was clear someone installed new pumps and failed to put them in the proper place. The customer wanted to let the business person know about the problem in order to prevent it from happening to someone else. While paying for his purchase he mentioned the problem to the cashier.

After explaining the situation, he received a response he was not expecting. Let's take a test to see if you can guess the response of the cashier.

Question 1: After the customer explained the situation, the cashier responded:

A. So.

B. I don't know anything about the pumps, I'm just the cashier.

C. Oh, thank you for bringing that to our attention. We will get someone to correct it. Thanks.

D. Maybe you are color blind.

Question 2: Since your advertising stressed the color coding of the pumps, one would think you would want the proper color in the proper place. Is there anyone I can report this to so it can be corrected? The cashier responded:

A. Nope.

B. That would be Steve. Let me take the information and I'll see he gets it.

C. I don't know I'm just the cashier.

D. Maybe you are color blind.

Question 3: I don't want this to happen to anyone else, so do I have to report this to

the state to get something done? The cashier responded:

A. Go ahead, who cares.

B. No sir, we can take care of that right away.

C. I'm just the cashier, do whatever you want.

D. Have you ever thought you may be color blind.

The response to all three concerns was 'A.'

In the three complaints I received, all the customer wanted was someone to listen and respond in a positive manner. The problem did not have to be repaired that minute, and no refund was asked for. The customers just wanted to feel they had helped by bringing the problem to the employee's attention. These are the type of customers we should want!

In today's extremely competitive business climate, every customer we have is one we need to keep. We should not give them reasons to go somewhere else. We are constantly looking for the balance of trained employees and good customer service. It is critical our employees understand the importance of addressing and listening to a customer's concerns. It's also important to know the proper person to take the concern to, and know that person will follow up.

In each case a state complaint was filed and an inspector/representative was sent to the location to file the complaint on the station's record. If a proper initial response had been given, these inspectors could've taken care of more important issues we all want addressed.

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Art Nash

Chief of DEQ's UST Division looks to new cleanup standards as the year's big success

By Amy Johnston

Art Nash doesn't own or operate an underground storage tank (UST) and he's not with an environmental consulting firm, but he does sit in the middle of the UST/MUSTFA debate heating up in Lansing.

As Chief of the Department of Environmental Quality's UST Division, Mr. Nash and his staff oversee all USTs in Michigan from tank registration to financial responsibility enforcement. He says bringing Michigan's USTs into compliance, with or without MUSTFA, is a concern of both the state and the regulated community.

"I like to approach this as a shared problem," Mr. Nash said as he explained his position of bringing together the legislature, the DEQ and tank owners/operators.

With his office two blocks from the Capitol, it's easy for Mr. Nash to meet with legislators, the governor's staff and the DEQ staff. But the people affected most by these regulations are scattered across Michigan. That is why Mr. Nash looks to groups like SSDA as his link to an impor-

tant group -- the regulated community.

"I depend on Terry [Burns, executive director of SSDA] to tell me what is going on out there. I want to hear what problems your people are having," said Mr. Nash, who met with SSDA members at this year's convention in August.

Moving to the DEQ

Mr. Nash has also learned to be flexible. He began working in hazardous materials management in 1977 with the State Police Fire Marshal Division. In 1994 he was assigned by the State Police to the Department of Natural Resources. Just this year the DNR was split, and now Mr. Nash works in the Department of Environmental Quality.

Despite all the shuffling, Mr. Nash thinks creating the DEQ was the right move. He said the department is now more accountable and responsible to the regulated community. Mr. Nash also said the lines of communication are more open since he reports directly to the DEQ's director, Russ Harding. He said Mr. Harding shares the same concerns with impact on the regulated community, making the new department more focused on responsible clean ups.

MUSTFA and the new compliance strategy

There may or may not be a second MUSTFA program, but those owed money should get paid, Mr. Nash said. He said the DEQ supports legislation to pay back tank owners owed money from pending invoices.

"It's absolutely critical to pay off the invoice debt," he said. "People are really hurting out there for their money. That's our number one goal. It is absolutely critical."

Although MUSTFA is no longer an available method to comply with financial responsibility (FR), Mr. Nash's department must still enforce FR compliance. Keeping the financial difficulties of tank owners in mind, Mr. Nash worked closely with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to set up a compliance strategy that is least burdensome. He said the current strategy of phased-in enforcement has four main goals:

Not to put anyone out of business.

Make sure money is available (through avenues like insurance agencies) to pay for



Lt. Art Nash in his office at the Department of Environmental Quality. Mr. Nash feels all current invoices with MUSTFA should be paid. He is also working to implement the RBCA standards to make future cleanups more affordable.

Continued on next page

future releases.

- Immediately address sites that can obtain insurance.
- Work with owners/operators at all stages.

RBCA: the success of the year

In a year dominated by the negative feeling toward the discontinuance of MUSTFA, Mr. Nash is happy to point out a big success -- adoption of the new Risk Based Corrective Action (RBCA) standards. The RBCA approach looks at every site on an individual basis when determining what cleanup approach should be taken. Mr. Nash said RBCA is the "true success story of the year" because it brings the owners/operators back into the equation. He said the problem with MUSTFA was after an owner paid their deductible they were taken out of the system. "Owners were not always aware of what was going on at their site," Mr. Nash said. RBCA is also expected to reduce cleanup costs. "If we can't have MUSTFA, at least we can reduce costs," he said. Mr. Nash's goal for the upcoming year is to oversee the implementation of RBCA and educate tank owners. He said their feedback through SSDA was instrumental in adopting RBCA, and will be more important in evaluating its merit.

The central link

Mr. Nash looks at himself as one link in the chain. He feels the problems associated with USTs are best dealt with when all sides are involved. He looks to SSDA for input and SSDA members look to him for fair solutions. Open communication worked when Mr. Nash was working on the road as a state trooper and it is working for him now as Chief of the UST Division.

FORMALITIES

Career

- Started career in 1970 with the Michigan State Police, where he worked as a trooper and undercover narcotics agent.
- In 1977 was moved to the Fire Marshal Division
- In 1980 began working with the Hazardous Materials Unit with the Fire Marshal.
- In 1994 the hazardous materials program moved to the Department of Natural Resources. Now, he is with the UST Division in the Department of Environmental Quality.

Education

- Bachelor of Science degree from Western Michigan University in 1970.
- Master of Public Administration from WMU in 1980.

Family

- Wife Jennifer and son Kirk.



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Can we talk?

Dealer roundtable group takes on the basics, tough questions

Twelve SSDA members from across the state have formed the Association's first dealer roundtable discussion group to share ideas, expertise and advice on the industry and their businesses.

The group was formed after a successful roundtable discussion at this year's convention in August. Dealers told us they wanted to work and share with each other. Dr. Camille Donnelly, who spoke at the Convention, was selected to facilitate this first group based on her success in starting similar roundtable groups.

The group meets once a month. Each month a different member hosts the meeting and creates the agenda. SSDA's goal is start more groups in the future with trained members acting as facilitators. If you are a member and interested in joining an upcoming group, please call Amy or Terry at SSDA at (517) 484-4096.

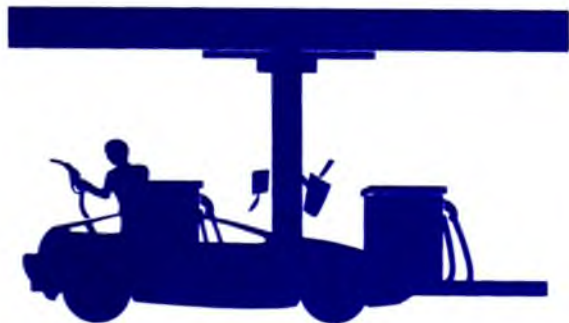


SSDA's first dealer roundtable discussion group: From left, Mike Egnatuk of Homer, Richard Bratschi of Lansing, Jim Malek of Grand Haven, Ed Weglarz of Birmingham, Connie Cothran of Waterford, facilitator Camille Donnelly, Gary Henricksen of Birmingham, Steve Boyer of McBride, Bill Wilmarth of Kalamazoo, Dennis Pellicci of Troy, and Terry Kildea of Okemos. Not pictured: Dave Horton of Brighton and Chuck Skrubka of Sterling Heights.

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Creating your own niche while maintaining the oil company's image

Image. The visual image you present with your convenience stores will define the way you are perceived. Your image determines which customers you will attract and what those customers will purchase.

Major oil companies offer incentives if you conform to their image program. This requires the store and fuel islands to have the same image. In many locations, this will be a beneficial arrangement. In other locations, it will not. Since the incentives are based on gallons pumped and a specific period of time, it may be to your advantage to go your own way.

On your own

Here are some general guidelines to determine the direction that you should take if you decide to image on your own:

• Interstate highway locations

Generally, interstate highway locations will benefit from a major oil company's image program. Many travelers will look for a specific brand they feel comfortable purchasing. Your pylon signage will become a draw off the interstate, and your image will reinforce that decision.

• Neighborhood locations

In a neighborhood location, you need your own store image to support the feeling of a full-line convenience store. Major oil company-imaged stores are often considered overpriced snack shops. You can become a better neighbor by creating an image to better match the neighborhood. A well-designed store can often over-

come zoning objections.

• Inner-city locations

When fueling is offered, the oil company image will be an asset at inner-city locations.

• Urban thoroughfare locations

A major oil company image will be beneficial in a location on an urban thoroughfare. Inside sales are sometimes low, and fuel is the main draw.

• Rural locations

Most rural locations should develop their own image to better suit the community. Fuel should retain the oil company image, but the store should be distinct. Local employees will enhance the feeling of community involvement.

• Resort locations

Resort locations should have the look and feel of the particular resort area. The customers can see major oil stations at home. They want a reinforcement of the resort atmosphere.

All stores providing an expanded foodservice will benefit from their own unique image. After all, how many customers feel good about eating in a service station?

Niche imaging

The majority of convenience stores will benefit from creating their own special niche in the marketplace. This demands a special look -- something to excite the imagination and to set you apart from the competition. The development of this type of store starts with the area demographics and lifestyle analysis.

For example, it may be a beach location similar to Gul-

lies, with "I got it at Gullies" T-shirts with bird droppings on the sleeve, or a mountaintop location similar to the new Nice N Easy, with a large vaulted wood ceiling and a scenic mural. It may be the silk trees and towering red ceramic tile entrance supported by a large chrome column at the new Pantry, or a '50s diner atmosphere at Gallaghers.

These stores have in common images ideally suited to their locations. They have the look and feel demanded by their customers' lifestyles. That is what image is all about -- meeting the expectations of the customers.

Whatever image you select, it must be reinforced by an interior match. Your exterior image will draw the customers in, but the interior image will keep the customers coming back. Designing an interior that provides the comfort level required by your particular customer base can have a dramatic impact on your store volume.

Color

Colors can excite or calm. A unique color scheme will be long remembered. Proportions of color are often more important than the color itself.

For example, a 90 percent red, 5 percent white and 5 percent blue stripe will appeal more to the Hispanic market. A one-third red, one-third white and one-third blue stripe will appeal more to "Bubba." A 5 percent red, 90

percent white and 5 percent blue stripe will appeal more to the Yuppies.

Whatever colors you select, be bold. A color band around your interior will be boring. Accent areas such as fountains and delis by changing color and texture.

Lighting is also a matter of color. Color is how you light it. Red can look rich and exciting or dull and brownish, depending on the lamp you use. Check with your lighting supplier or designer concerning which lamps to use for your color scheme.

Finally, the No. 1 asset in your image program will always be your employees. Dress them to match the store and the store design. Treat your store like a stage, with your employees as the performers. A good stage setting is always memorable.

When all of these elements are in place, your store will "feel good." You will be a predator in your area, not bait.

Jim Mitchell is president of Jim Mitchell & Associates, a convenience store design and consulting firm located at 1200 Walnut Hill Lane, Suite 2000, Irving, TX 75038. (800) 247-5635. This article was reprinted from the National Petroleum News.

The No. 1 asset in your image program will always be your employees. Treat your store like a stage, with your employees as the performers.

Regulatory Update

Terry Burns, SSDA-MI

MUSTFA on Senate floor; cigarette floor stock tax exemption

MUSTFA

There has been a great deal of activity in the legislature recently regarding MUSTFA. On November 29th the Senate passed Senate Bill 738 which is part of a two-bill package designed to insure outstanding MUSTFA invoices as of June 29, 1995 are paid in full. SB 738 also increases the emergency response fund to \$3 million from the previous \$1 million.

The companion House bill, which extends the sunset to whatever year needed to pay the outstanding invoices, was held up in committee in early November. This delay was due to a group of people opposing the bill because it did not solve the whole problem at one time. The legislature's stance is to take this problem and try to solve it one step at a time.

Many proposals have

been introduced to correct the whole problem, but no action has been taken on them to date. When the Senate was discussing SB 738 on November 29th, substitute measures were introduced to no avail.

We have written each legislator expressing our concern, and are talking to members of the Senate and House daily, making sure this issue does not go away without resolve.

The phase in schedule for enforcement of financial responsibility was delayed until December 1st due to a court action against the State. At press time no results were known of this court action. An update to all members will soon be mailed (if you have not already received it).

Cigarette tax of 1994/ floor stock inventory

The Michigan State Treasury is randomly requesting verification of the floor stock of cigarettes on January 31, 1994. This verification is due to the change in the cigarette tax to 75 cents per pack of 20 in May 1994. Business owners were allowed to take the floor stock of cigarettes on January 31, 1994 and mark them in an evident way to differentiate them from newly purchased cigarettes. The marked cigarettes still in inventory on April 30, 1994 were not subject to the tax increase.

Business owners were to use Form C-1594 to calculate the number of floor stock cigarettes and the new inventory in order to determine the amount of tax owed.

The recent random inspections by the Treasury are to verify the inventory numbers used on Form C-1594 and to verify what type of marking system was used. Due to the large number of filers, it has taken some time for the audit division to begin random verification requests.

Questions have been raised regarding the legalities of this method of tax collection on floor stocks. The Attorney General recently decided this was legal and appeared to be the legislative intent at that time. Hopefully this will end the question and put the issue to rest.

If you have any questions on this tax or the forms, please call the SSDA office at (517) 484-4096.

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YOUNG'S FUEL EQUIPMENT SERVICES

Tanks to fuel pumps to lighted canopies, two companies come together

Rick Bibik of Young's Fuel Equipment is quick to point out the advantage of doing business with Young's: One stop shopping.

Tank removals and installation, monitor systems, fuel pumps, card readers, cash consoles, lubrication equipment and hoists, electrical work, HVAC, building additions and remodels...The list goes on as Mr. Bibik, Senior Vice President, explains why Young's offers just about everything for a service station, except candy bars.

"If an owner can pick up the phone and make one phone call, his life will be easier," he said.

Young's Fuel Equipment Services' diversification comes from the combined resources of two companies. Walter E. Brandt & Sons, a fuel equipment contractor founded in 1933, and Young's Environmental Cleanup Inc., involved in removals and remediation since 1988, decided to make their long partnership official two years ago by forming Young's Fuel Equipment. Bibik said this gives customers the advantage of resources and expertise in several areas of interest to service station operators.

Young's hasn't stopped with the creation of this new

company. Recently a partnership was formed with a general contractor and architect/engineering firm. Gasco Man-

agement specializes in building service stations from the ground up.

"Dealers today are more educated about the industry than ever before," Bibik said. "Customers do their research and demand value for their money." That is why Young's trains its staff on all equipment it sells.

"We want our people up to date on software, trends and we want them to have the ability to service the equipment," Bibik said, adding he won't sell a product if his staff can't service it.

While the business has branched out, fuel pumps and related equipment remain a core. Charles Brandt, General Manager, said his father began fixing fuel pumps in 1931 when "tank holes were dug by horse and hand." He remains focused on the customer service practices he

learned from his father's business.

Mr. Bibik summed up their business philosophy this way, "No matter what business you're in, it's customer driven."

For more information on Young's, see page 4 or call (810) 785-5509.



Rick Bibik, left, and Charles Brandt outside the Young's Fuel Equipment headquarters in Flint.

FORMALITIES

- Founded in 1993 when two companies came together.
- Based in Michigan, but operate in Ohio, Illinois and Indiana.
- Bob Young, CEO; Steve VanderZyl, President.

DODSON GROUP

Long partnership with SSDA pays for dealers

When Dodson Group began offering workers' compensation insurance for SSDA members there were

no self-serve gas pumps or c-stores in stations, and 24 hour operation was rare. Gas cost well under 50 cents a gallon and service attendants pumped gas, cleaned windows and checked oil.

Thirty three years later, the partnership between

Dodson Group and SSDA is still benefiting members with quality coverage and yearly dividends. In fact, SSDA members have received dividends every year since the Dodson Dividend plan started in 1962.

"We've had 33 years of consecutive dividends and SSDA is the only association I can say that about," said Elmer Gibson, manager of association operations for Dodson Group.

Dodson operates in 37 states and 75 percent of their business is association programs.

"Our relationship with SSDA is something we don't take for granted," Gibson said.

"Thirty three years of consecutive dividends shows a lot of allegiance between the two organizations."

With more than half of

FORMALITIES

- Founded in 1900. It is one of the largest privately held companies in Missouri.
- Has been a specialty writer of workers' compensation insurance for more than 30 years.
- Cathleen Dodson, Chairman and CEO; James R. Jones, President and Chief Operating Officer.

Continued on next page

all SSDA members participating, Dodson Group's program is one of the association's most popular member benefits. Through the program, SSDA members are eligible for great rates on workers' compensation and property/casualty insurance. At the end of each year participating members are eligible for a paid dividend.

Dodson Group also offers members an interest free installment plan for their policies, allowing dealers to pay for their premium over a period of time rather than taking a large hit once a year.

The Dodson Dividend plan has evolved over the years, giving members more privileges and options. Mr. Gibson said these changes and improvements are a di-

rect result of the open communication between the leadership at Dodson Group and SSDA.

"The biggest bond we have is the longevity of this program and the ability on both sides to give and take,"

he said.

One example of this open communication is the recent change in classification of a c-store employee for coverage purposes. Now, dealers can classify c-store personnel as store employees

rather than service station employees, lowering the premium for those employees.

If you would like more information on the SSDA endorsed Dodson program, please call the SSDA office at (517) 484-4096.

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 - Save you up to 50 percent with a Visa/Mastercard program; with no transaction fees and a fixed rate of 1.98 percent.
 - Earn you an annual rebate with Dodson workers' compensation.
 - Give you additional promotional points toward Tire Wholesalers programs, as a Tire Wholesalers customer and SSDA member.
 - Host an annual convention each year filled with business advantages and entertainment.
 - Protect your interests by having an SSDA representative on the MUSTFA Policy Board.
 - Make sure your voice is heard in Lansing with an active legislative support network and PAC.
 - Put a staff at your fingertips to find the legislative and regulatory answers you need.
 - Invite you to join a network of hundreds of other dedicated professionals in the industry who can help with advice and support.
- The SSDA can provide you with the knowledge you need and the savings you want.

Please send the application below to SSDA, 200 N. Capitol Suite 420, Lansing, MI 48933

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BUSINESS ADDRESS: _____	
CITY: _____	MI ZIP: _____ PHONE: () _____
COUNTY: _____	TYPE OF OWNERSHIP: <input type="checkbox"/> CORPORATE <input type="checkbox"/> NON-CORPORATE <small>SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP PARTNERSHIP</small>
ENCLOSED PLEASE FIND A CHECK FOR _____	
PLEASE CHARGE MY MEMBERSHIP TO MY MC OR VISA (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE) CARD # AND EXP. DATE _____	
PLEASE BILL ME	
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES:	ANNUAL ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP DUES:
_____ \$41 monthly (electronic banking)	_____ \$25 monthly (electronic banking)
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Add \$120 per station after four stations.	
_____	_____
Signature	Date
Dec. 1995 SQ	

In the Repair Facility

Joie Duffy, Washington, Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania
Service Station and Automotive Repair Association

Letting your customers know you're worth the price

Remember that Cybill Shepard commercial for L'Oreal where she tosses her golden locks around a few times, tells you how great her hairs looks when she uses the stuff and justifies the cost of product with that wonderful "I'm worth it!" line. As a marketing person, I love that line. One of the first lessons I learned in sales was not to apologize for the cost of my product.

But I wonder about those of you out there who are selling automotive repairs. What do you do when you're confronted with an irate customer who thinks you're charging an arm and a leg for a "simple" little procedure he thinks you should be doing for free out of the goodness of your heart? Let's face it there are lots of folks out there with just that kind of mind set. Just in case you're not convinced, think back to the last time you spoke with your insurance agent, or the parts supplier. Do the phrases "the cheapest you've got" or "only the basic coverage" ring any bells? Everyone is watching expenses right now and major car repair bills are usually not budgeted items. No wonder customers are looking to cut costs.

Still, you can't cave into the pressure from your customers to lower your prices -- not if you want to make a profit and stay in business. So it's up to you to educate your customers, to let them know your rates are fair and based on the increasing expenses you are facing. I know you've

heard this before, but it bears repeating -- over and over and over.

According to Mitch Schneider in the January 1994 edition of *Motor Service*, the automotive repair industry is "both labor and equipment intensive as a result of high technology: computerized electronic engine controls, fuel management systems, distributorless ignition, antilock brake systems, active suspension, automatic traction control, electronically controlled transmissions and computerized comfort controls."

As a shop owner today you must have highly skilled workers who, let's face it, need to be paid good salaries with decent benefits. Add to that the fact you must keep those skilled personnel current on the ever changing technology that grows daily by leaps and bounds. In addition, equipment costs have definitely kept pace with the growing technology. There is a definite correlation between sophistication and expense.

If these factors are not enough to justify your prices, remember to add the increasing expense associated with environmental regulations. And don't forget the everyday expenses so easily overlooked like utility bills, advertising costs and community service donations.

Now I can hear you saying "OK, OK I know all this is true, but how do I let my customer know about it?" A big part of the answer is "attitude." And by attitude I don't mean you have to be an

egotistical braggart. If you know you're "worth it" then that feeling will come across to your customers. Your employees have to generate the same feeling or you've lost your edge. Also make sure your customers know they are "worth it" to you and so is their car. You really have to appreciate they are intelligent enough to recognize they should be patronizing your business and not another "cheaper" establishment. You already know they're worth it if they are regular customers. If you're smart you will go the extra mile for them.

Letting your customers know what you're up against, without complaining about your problems, is another way to let them know you're worth it. You may need to employ a little creativity in getting the message across. First and foremost, be sure to display your tech's credentials, especially if they are ASE certified. This serves two purposes. It builds the confidence of your customers and subtly lets them know your shop employs competent, well trained technicians. It also gives the techs some well deserved recognition. Let's face it, a pat on the back never hurts.

For a number of years we have been advocating the inclusion of an environmental fee in all work orders. Consumers are becoming more and more attuned to the

It's up to you to educate your customers, to let them know your rates are fair...

fact that recycling and other efforts that improve the environment carry a price tag. Don't be nervous about listing a standard charge for environmental costs on your ticket. If it makes you feel better, make a list of your environmental costs to accompany the charge.

Don't forget about equipment costs in this customer education program. One dealer proudly displays invoices of his latest equipment in his customer waiting area. He makes a point of telling customers about his latest shop purchase and how it better helps him serve their needs. The higher the cost, the more he brags about the purchase.

Of course the best way to convince the public you're "worth it" is to be worth it. Deliver high quality service consistently and the word gets around. Before you know it, you'll have more work than you can handle.

This article was reprinted from the October 1995 issue of The Nozzle, the magazine of the Washington, Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania Service Station and Automotive Repair Association. Ms. Duffy is Associate Editor.

MFDA protects your business at time of death



The Motor Fuel Distribution Act provides very significant benefits to Michigan's dealers.

But those benefits are meaningful only if dealers know what the statute provides and how to use it.

A five year old statute provides dealers with substantial benefits. But too few know what the statute provides or how it works. The unfortunate result is some dealers are losing opportunities to sell their franchise or protect their families. I have written about this law previously, but from questions I have received it seems like time for a refresher.

The Motor Fuel Distribution Act was approved in October 1990 and signed by Governor Blanchard. The law was designed to deal with two important aspects of the relationship between dealers and suppliers; transfer by sale; and transfer following death. These two matters are expressly reserved to regulation by the states under the Petroleum Marketing Practices Act. And both implicate the right of the dealer to enjoy the benefits of building the value of his or her business.

MFDA applies only to dealers who sell branded petroleum products. It does not apply to local brands or those facilities selling gasoline that does not carry a "refiner's mark." It applies only to persons who are "franchisees" as defined by PMPA.

Designating a successor

MFDA permits dealers to designate a person to succeed them upon death. This was a most serious problem before MFDA. PMPA per-

mits the termination of a franchise upon the death of the dealer. The result is that the families of some dealers were forced out of valuable franchises when the dealer died. MFDA creates a very simple process to insure a franchise will continue. But the dealer must act during his or her lifetime to insure the franchise is transferred.

The dealer must provide written notice to the franchisor of the name of the person who will succeed the dealer (SSDA has forms that meet the standards outlined in MFDA). The notice must also contain the address and relationship of the successor. The dealer may name both a primary and secondary successor. The primary successor may be, for example, the dealer's spouse; the secondary successor, a child.

The designation must be submitted to the franchisor during the dealer's lifetime. The dealer should have proof the form was filed. Mailing the form by certified mail is satisfactory if the dealer keeps the return receipt attached to a copy of the designation form. The form should then be filed with the dealer's important papers. And the dealer should make certain both the primary and secondary successors know about the designation.

MFDA provides a 30 day period for the designee to claim the right to succeed the dealer. The successor

should contact the franchisor within that period following the dealer's death. A written notice should be provided to the franchisor informing them the successor has agreed to operate the franchise. The franchisor must then permit the transfer of the franchise to the successor.

MFDA permits a franchisor to refuse to accept a designation if the successor does not meet the "reasonable standards" required by the franchisor. But the franchisor has to have very good reasons to reject the person. And a designee may challenge the refusal to accept the successor.

Designating a Purchaser

MFDA permits a franchisor to designate a prospective purchaser for the franchise. The Act requires the franchisee to notify the franchisor of the proposed sale in writing. The notice should provide the purchaser's name, address and information regarding their financial qualifications including business experience. The franchisor has the right to request additional information.

The franchisor has 60 days to consider the proposed transfer. This period begins to run from the point at which the dealer has provided the franchisor informa-

Continued on next page

tion sufficient to permit the franchisor to make a decision regarding the prospective purchaser. But the franchisor cannot make unreasonable demands for information for the purpose of extending the consideration period. The 60 day period does not begin to run again simply because the franchisor has requested additional information.

A franchisor may elect to purchase the franchise from the dealer at the price agreed upon with the purchaser. The sale terms must also be the same. However, this right to meet competition does not apply if the sale is to the dealer's spouse or adult children or children-in-law.

Dealers selling their franchises make two com-

mon mistakes that invite franchisors refusal of a sale. First, they do not secure a proper agreement for sale of the franchise. Often sales are handshake deals or described on a real estate sales form used for the sale of houses. The agreement for sale of a going business should be prepared by an experienced person. It should be complete, leaving nothing to discuss later. Real estate salespersons often are unskilled at drafting complex documents. A franchisor is more likely to approve a sale if it knows the terms of the deal.

Second, dealers often do not secure adequate information about the purchaser. The franchisor can only be expected to approve a deal if it knows the purchaser is credit worthy. Cash deals, while attractive to a seller, are often a source of concern for

the franchisor. It wants to know the prospective dealer is going to be able to pay for products purchased.

MFDA prohibits a

MFDA provides very significant benefits to Michigan's dealers. But those benefits are meaningful only if dealers know what the statute

MFDA gives you two options

Designate a Successor

A dealer needs to notify the franchisor of the successor in writing. This notice must contain the relationship of the successor to the dealer and the address of the successor. A dealer can name both a primary and secondary successor.

Designate a purchaser

Again, the dealer must notify the franchisor of the purchaser in writing. The dealer must also provide financial information on the purchaser. This gives the franchisor 60 days to consider the proposed transfer.

franchisor from unreasonably withholding consent to a transfer. The seller has the right to commence suit to challenge the refusal.

The law works only if dealers know about it.

provides and use it. Every dealer should designate a primary successor and secondary successor. And every dealer should know they have certain rights if they wish to sell their franchises.

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Been There Done That

By Amy Johnston



Dealer Larry Troy in one of the bays of his station, M-59 & Crooks Autocare in Rochester Hills. Larry's love of automobiles keeps him busy at the station most every day.

Dealer Larry Troy has his own definition of retirement, and it doesn't include slowing down. It means coming to work almost every day, spending the winter months in one of the wreckers, keeping a watchful eye on the industry, and committing time to SSDA. Even his wife Beverly still enjoys working at the station three days a week.

"I like getting away in the wrecker and meeting new people. That's retirement for me. I like it and I get paid now and then," said Larry, who begins a term as 1st Vice President of SSDA in January.

"I like what I'm doing. If I didn't I would have been gone long ago."

There is no question about who is in charge of M59 and Crooks Autocare in Rochester Hills. And there is no question about who has devoted his career to making a better name for the independent dealer. The walls of Larry's small office are completely filled with plaques of recognition from Shell Oil, SSDA, AAA, and the community; pictures of Larry with other dealers and politicians; and newspaper clippings about the trials and triumphs of his business.

Like many dealers, the path to the ser-

vice station business was not a direct one for Larry.

He was born in Highland Park, Michigan during the depression and joined the army after high school, ending up in Korea. After 28 months in combat, Larry was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and received the Silver Star and the Bronze Star for valor and heroism under fire. He served in the Army Reserve where he first worked at a gas station in Oklahoma. After a stint at Goodyear Tire Co., Larry and Beverly moved to Michigan in 1962 for an engineering position at Ford.

During an educational leave from Ford, Larry went to school and found a job managing stations for Amoco Oil. In 1967 he took the plunge and bought a Shell station on 8 Mile and Southfield Road in Southfield, where he would stay for 20 years.

"Back then it was all full serve," he said. "We had the largest Shell station in the United States."

The 1970s were busy, but successful for Larry. He remembers pumping 3 million gallons in 1972 and being one of the largest AAA contractors in the state. He also fondly recalls building relationships with customers by pumping their

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Larry, with wife Beverly, has been with Shell Oil for almost 30 years. He bought his first location in 1967 in Southfield.



Earlier in his career Larry owned several stations in metro-Detroit, now he just concentrates on this one in Rochester Hills.



Larry with one of his wreckers.

gas, fixing their cars and just have a friendly conversation here and there. Larry is a dealer who is hesitant to praise food marts and pay-at-pump services. He loves the business of automobiles and customers who know your name.

"We've created this fast business with no people, he said. "We forgot how we got here in the first place, by serving the motor-ing public. People don't need Twinkies and milk; they need to have their car running."

Everything wasn't perfect 20 years ago though. Larry remembers fighting hard along with SSDA for the rights of dealers. He was in President Carter's office for the signing of the Petroleum Marketing Prac-tices Act, which protects leasee dealers.

"One year I went to Washington D.C. 27 times lobbying for PMPA," Larry said.

He points to PMPA as just one triumph of SSDA-MI and the national SSDA. These efforts, he said, have made life easier for the dealer of today.

"Guys around now are taking advantage of what SSDA has done," Larry said. "There aren't many who have been around 30 years and remember how it was."

It didn't take Larry long to find out about SSDA. He remembers dealer, and now fellow board member, Joe Grish telling him about the association right after he got his first station. A year later, Larry was an active member. As a board member on and off for 25 years, a former national director of SSDA-AT, and a legislative player

through it all, Larry is quick to point out the main advantage of the association.

"The more guys you have, the more fire power you have. And you can win a war or a battle with fire power," he said.

Next to fire power, Larry believes knowledge is key in this industry. He said that's one reason he can't walk away, even though he's "retired."

"This business is chang-ing. It's changed so much in the 30 years I've been here," Larry said. "I like to keep my finger on it. This business amazes me every day, how things have changed."

In this evolving busi-ness, Larry Troy is a con-stant. He knows where his business was, where it is now, and where he wants it to go. His office says it all with the walls showing his past, the hum of the fax machine in touch with the industry today, and the excitement in his voice when he talks of all that is to come.

The SSDA is honored to have Larry Troy as an active member for so long. Mr Troy's unwillingness to let things rest as they are has helped our members more than once. He is a dealer that has seen it all, and still wants to make a difference.

FORMALITIES

Career

- After serving in Korea, Larry was in the Army Reserve.
- He began working for Ford as an engineer 1962.
- Opened his first Shell station in 1967.

Community

- Past president of the Lions. He is currently club secretary and active in the leader dog program. He was Lion of the year in Southfield.
- Member of Shell Dealer Advisory Board.
- Active with AAA.

Family

- Wife, Beverly; 3 children; 7 grandchildren.

Reinforce the positive and your employees will be loyal ones

One of the most frustrating challenges for owners or managers is to get their employees to consistently treat the customer right.

Far too often the customer service training program that is completed gets mediocre results. The employee of the month program seems to die a quiet death. The motivational posters urging employees to excel in being a team player and delivering excellent service appear to be useless. What is the missing link that will bind these and other reinforcers together to create the changes necessary?

Consistently using a system for providing positive reinforcement to your employees when they "do right" is the golden key. Remember, having a system and not using it is no better than not having one at all.

First identify the behavior and results you want to see. Both you and your employees need to be tuned into the same channel for the kind of service you want delivered. Their perception of what good service is can be quite a bit different from your perception.

Management consultant Dr. Tom Connellan suggests your system include reinforcement of the desired results and the desired behavior. For example, when reinforcing the DESIRED RESULTS it could sound like this: "Larry, you and your team members suc-

ceeded in achieving your projected goals for last month. Great job! Keep up the good work!"

What is important here is being specific about the RESULTS achieved. You are giving recognition to his success for his ability to get his team to work together and reach the projected goals for the month.

When reinforcing the DESIRED BEHAVIOR it could sound like this: "Sally, you did a good job in finding out what that last customer really wanted. By asking the right questions you were able to help him specifically identify the type of repair he was looking for. That customer received the kind of service we want to deliver."

By telling Sally that she asked the "right questions" reinforced her BEHAVIOR of using questions to discover what the customer really wanted. As a result the customer received the attention he deserved and received the right kind of service.

As W. Clement Stone has said "Never expect what you don't first inspect." If you want the right behavior from your employees be sure to inspect it as they do it. This way you can help them make the necessary adjustments.

It is vital that you continue to periodically reinforce the right behavior. How often do you reinforce it? A good rule of thumb is

Employee tips

Tell them why

Instead of just ordering people to do things, take a moment to explain why things need to be done.

Example: "The reason the report needs to be done by five this afternoon is that we need it for tomorrow morning's 8 o'clock meeting. When you explain why you need something done, people will seize the opportunity to offer suggestions you hadn't thought of."

-Hope Health Letter

Before hiring that applicant

To determine prospective employees' phone skills, call them when they should be busy and see how well they handle your questions.

Listen for professional sounding voices that are both friendly and resonant. And make sure their voices convey a positive image that reflects self-confidence, enthusiasm, quick thinking, patience and courtesy.

-Communication Briefings

a lot in the beginning and intermittently after that. Three of the most powerful ways to reinforce behavior are:

1. One-on-one verbal "attaboys or attagirls."
2. Praise the individual in front of others.
3. "Talk behind their back." Praise the individual when he or she is not present. Word of your praise will usually get back to them by way of the grapevine.

A word of caution. Be careful not to inadvertently punish the right behavior or reward the wrong behavior. This is illustrated in the example of the employee asking the customer questions about the type of problems his car was experiencing. If the manager were to criticize the employee for asking the customer too many questions when other customers were waiting for as-

sistance, he would be punishing the "right" behavior.

If this manager were to praise the employee for speeding up his assistance to the customer, not realizing that in doing so the employee neglected to ask the necessary questions to satisfy the customer, he would be rewarding the "wrong" behavior.

In conclusion, identify the type of service results and behavior you want and be sure to systematically reinforce it. Be consistent and persistent and your employees will follow through with the quality service you want them to provide.

Tom Borg is with Tom Borg & Associates, a customer development and employee performance consulting firm based in Canton, MI, (313) 453-8019.

How much coffee do you drink?

The average coffee drinker drinks 3.5 cups of coffee a day. More men than women drink coffee, and most drink it in the morning.

These are the findings of the U.S. Coffee Consumption Trends and Outlook study by the National Coffee Association.

The study says coffee is the second most popular beverage, next to soft drinks. People in the Northeast and North Central part of the U.S. drink more coffee than in other parts of the country.

The findings in this study may be beneficial in how you sell coffee at your station. For

example, did you know: 50 - 59 year olds drink the most coffee. Regular coffee accounts for 84 percent of all coffee consumed. Only 38 percent of coffee drinkers drink their coffee black, the rest add sweetener, creamer or both.

The study also showed the rise in specialty coffees like gourmet flavored and cappuccino. Both espresso and cappuccino drinking rose in winter 1995. Although a large majority still drink regular flavored coffee.

If you would like more information on the study, call the National Coffee Association at (212) 344-5596, or SSDA.

Law gives states I/M flexibility

The National Highway System was signed into law by President Clinton, giving states flexibility when it comes to inspection/maintenance programs.

The new law allows states to submit their own inspection/maintenance programs and propose the number of credits they should receive. This prohibits the EPA from applying any automatic credit discount to decentralized test and repair systems.

The new law also repeals the maximum national speed limit of 55; repeals requirements relating to motorcycle

helmet laws; and clarifies that the Clean Air Act requirements apply only in non-attainment areas and areas required to have air quality maintenance plans.

Car wash study to gauge customer attitudes

The International Car Wash Association is conducting a study to gauge consumer perceptions of professional car washing.

The study will include full service, exterior conveyor, self-service and in-bay automatic washes.

If you would like more information contact ICA at (312) 321-5199.

For Sale

Equipment. An Allen Smartscope with an oscilloscope. Call LeRoy Schultz at (313) 459-1049.

Algonac station for sale. 120' x 120' frontage on M29 in Algonac. Two bays, c-store, full service and self-service. Gasoline, kerosene and diesel. Some equipment will stay. Across the street from public access to St. Clair River. At present a Sunoco, but can change. Call (810) 794-4310.

Sunoco station for sale. Two bays with a c-store. Call (517) 467-3003.

Service station equipment. Longtime Sunoco dealer has sold his station. Available for sale: Sunoco merchandising materials, diagnostic equipment, cabinets, signs, fluids, filters, wiper blades and other equipment. For more information please call Leo Beacham at (810) 739-3797.

Independent unbranded station at 2002 W. Main in Kalamazoo. Includes three repair bays and self-serve pumps for gas and diesel fuel. For more information please call Bill Freevol at 800/862-0358

Station for sale. 150' of M24 frontage. Zoned for commercial use (c-store and/or full service). Asking \$250,000. Please call (810) 628-1875 for more information.

Major brand service station. Includes three-bay repair facility with c-store. Prime East Lansing location. Please call SSDA at (517) 484-4096 for name and number of seller.

Auto repair and diagnostic equipment. Computer scanner, brake lathe, strut compressor, allen scope and many others. Please call SSDA at (517) 484-4096 for name and number of seller.

If you are interested in buying or selling an existing service station or equipment please call the SSDA at (517) 484-4096. We are keeping a running list of sellers and buyers.

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