The president's platform

Choose your words carefully

COLUMN BY LARRY HAGEMEISTER



As rebuilders we market what we do by our business cards, the signs on our buildings, and our advertising. We can mislead our customers by putting that "rebuilt" word on our cards and signs. I suggest simply using the words "alternators, starters and generators."

If you don't think you mislead your customers, listen to them. I can't tell you how many times I have been in a rebuilder's shop and observed a sale. The customer is looking for a starter and the rebuilder tells him he has a new one on the shelf ready to go and gives him an exchange price. (Many rebuilders must sell new units on occasion to get cores to rebuild). The customer tells the rebuilder, "I have been driving by here for years and did not realize that you had new or rebuilt starters. I thought you would only rebuild my starter.' The rebuilder responds by telling the customer his list of services: "We have rebuilt, new, or we can rebuild or repair your starter, whatever you would like."

I'm sure you all have had a conversation like this with a customer. For me it's very frustrating thinking about all the units we have as I listen to the customer tell me he has been in every parts store and tractor dealership within a 50-mile range looking for an alternator on his Ford tractor, and we have one on the shelf ready to go. We do our best to combat this with things like explaining our services with "Messages On Hold," and listing word "rebuilt" as one of our services, but not on our sign.

Still don't think this word confuses your customers? Look at your local radiator shop—I doubt his sign says "rebuilt radiators." It simply says…radiators. Rebuilding a radiator is one of their services. How about one of the local mechanics? They have a list of their services, brakes being one of them. He doesn't list it as rebuilt brakes. How about the local transmission shop? Their sign says "transmissions," not "rebuilt transmissions."

Here's a tip that we use to help educate our customers on what we do. There are many car shows this time of year, they have raffles and drawings and are looking for donations. Since 7127 one-wire alternators are very popular with car enthusiasts, we donate a 7127 one-wire alternator. But we only give a gift certificate so the winner has to come and claim the alternator. That way they will find out where we are located and it gives us a chance to let them know about the other services we offer.

Even though this rebuilding industry has its challenges, I still think it's the best game in town.

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