



# CRA BULLETIN

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Disputes

After my first 12 months of disputes, I have dealt with around 24. Whilst they are all unique, it's fair to say that there tends to be a common thread. Invariably the real issue is that the customer's expectations are not matched by the repairer. Sometimes these expectations are quite unrealistic, but that's not really the issue. There is always an opportunity to agree on expectations at the beginning. Better sooner than later.

I have also discovered that the whole customer service experience our clients recognize is not limited to the quality of the repair. Their experience includes:

- the first contact whether by phone or in person
- the way they are treated
- how they are kept informed of progress
- whether schedules are kept
- how the vehicle is presented to them after the repair.

Most customers expect a quality repair as a matter of course. The way to differentiate your business is in the way you treat them, not their vehicle.

Of the disputes which have been dealt with, most are small jobs involving rust or WOF compliance work. When contacted, invariably the repairer has commented,

"I knew this was going to be a problem."

"We took the job on against my better judgement"

"I was only trying to do him a favour"

So invariably you should have followed that gut instinct, or at least made it very clear what the customer could expect. If after accepting the job, you discover more problems, communicate with the customer. Nobody likes nasty surprises.

Here is one unique problem you should watch out for:

*The case involved an "at fault" driver who agreed to pay for the repairs of the other party. The job was quoted and accepted, but the innocent party did not want to have the repairs done straight away on the basis that he needed to save up to have some other work done at the same time. The "at fault" driver wanted it dealt with, so the repairer banked his cheque and to balance the books, invoiced him. The problem this leads to is that an invoice was issued for work not yet carried out. A better way to account for the money is to issue a receipt and create a sundry debtor with a credit balance which can be extinguished when the work is done and the invoice created.*

Of the total disputes dealt with, only 3 led to a disputes application form being completed, and branch committees convened. On the basis that association members probably account for over 200,000 repairs annually, this represents a very small percentage.

The low complaint rate is a credit to you for dealing with problems before things turn sour. Just remember that a complaint is not a personal slate against you, but an opportunity to turn a negative situation into a positive one.