Dealership Vs Independent Repair Facilities – Which Is Better?

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Have you heard the saying "Only two things in life are certain: death and taxes?" Well, if you own a vehicle, I'd add one more certainty – vehicle repairs! While your car is under the original manufacturer's warranty, repairs may only be an inconvenience since you can simply take your car to the dealership and have it fixed at no cost to you. But what happens once your original warranty has expired? Do you still take your vehicle to the dealership for repairs? Or should you find an independent repair facility? Which is better?

As with most complex questions in life, the answer is "it depends." This article will help you better understand the differences between the dealership and an independent repair facility, and which one is a better choice for you.

What About Dealership Service Departments?

- The dealership service department specializes in maintaining and repairing only the vehicle brand(s) that the dealership sells.
- As a customer, you usually deal with a service advisor while the repair technicians and mechanics stay in the service bay.
- Dealerships generally work on hundreds of cars each month, have a high capacity for cars at any given time
- Dealships have factory-trained technicians.

What About Independent Repair Shops?

- These are usually smaller than dealership service departments
- They tend to work on many different vehicle brands.
- Customers are likely to meet directly with the mechanic working on their car
- Many of these shops are founded by and/or staffed by people who previously worked at a dealership as a technician.

Benefits of Going to the Dealership

Dealerships tend to get a bad rap, but they're not all bad. There are benefits of going to the dealership for repairs.

- First, if your vehicle is still under the manufacturer's warranty, you should take it to the dealership for repair since your repair should be covered by the warranty.
- The technicians and mechanics at the dealership are factory-trained specifically to work on your vehicle. In the case of a highly complex problem they have expertise and testing equipment that is specific to your vehicle's brand.
- However, don't let this be the only reason you choose a dealership as you can probably find a former dealership technician who works at an independent shop.

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- Another benefit of going to the dealership may be the overall convenience and experience.
- Dealerships are more likely to have a comfortable and clean waiting area with drinks and/or snacks, and more importantly,
- They're more likely to provide shuttle service or loaner cars while your car is being worked on. However, you can find some of these amenities at independent shops as well.

Benefits of Going to an Independent Repair Facility

Like dealerships, independent repair facilities can also get a bad rap. People may assume the dealership will be more reliable. However, when you find a reputable independent repair facility, there are many benefits to going there for your vehicle repairs. *Consumer Reports* surveys have shown that independent mechanics ranked higher than dealership servicing for customer satisfaction, price, quality, courteousness, and on-time repairs. There are many reasons for these higher rankings.

- One of them is that people often have a relationship directly with the mechanic or technician who repairs their vehicle.
- Another reason is that dealerships don't have to try as hard to win or keep customers.
- Finally, the service advisors in the dealerships often get commissions or bonuses from "selling" certain parts and repairs, while independent facilities are motivated to provide you with an honest and good deal to help build a long-term relationship.
- The biggest and probably most well-known benefit is the cost savings.
- Independent repair facilities usually have less overhead than dealerships and use aftermarket parts, so their parts and labor tend to cost less.
- Unlike dealerships who have to use OEM parts, independent repair facilities are free to use aftermarket parts, which are usually cheaper.

If you want to learn more about the difference between OEM and aftermarket parts, check out our article of the topic. This is especially an important distinction if you have a vehicle protection plan. People who purchase a protection plan often assume that all they are going to pay is their deductible when they take their vehicle in for repair. However, this is not always true. If you take your vehicle into a dealership for repairs or insist on OEM parts at an independent repair facility, the plan administrator may not cover all the costs. OEM parts and dealership labor rates cost more, and extended vehicle warranty plans often only pay for aftermarket parts and the average labor rate for repair facilities in the area. That means that you could get stuck paying the difference in price out-of-pocket.

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